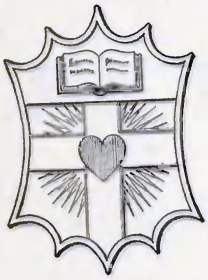

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THE
HISTORY OF ENGLISH RATIONALISM
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH RATIONALISM

IN THE

NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY

ALFRED WILLIAM BENN

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

'When the Eleates asked Xenophanes whether they should sacrifice to Leucothea, and mourn for her, or not, he advised them not to sacrifice to her if she was human, and not to mourn for her if she was divine.'—ARISTOTLE.

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ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

P. 12. Mr. A. R. Wallace's acknowledgment of his debt to the 'Vestiges' will be found in 'The Wonderful Century,' p. 137.

P. 58. For the passages quoted from Augustus Hare, see his 'Story of My Life,' Vol. I., pp. 73, 105, 109, 112, 169, 175, 202.

P. 168. For James Mill's treatment of Association, see his 'Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind,' Vol. I., chap. iii., and especially J. S. Mill's note, p. 111, in the edition of 1869. But the younger Mill does not seem to have observed the didactic considerations by which his father was influenced in making this curious reduction of association by resemblance to association by contiguity.

P. 448. The dialogue referred to is called 'The Responsibilities of Unbelief,' and will be found in Vernon Lee's 'Baldwin,' pp. 15, *sqq*. For the connexion with 'Sir Percival,' see 'Life and Letters of J. H. Shorthouse,' p. 239.

ERRATA

P. 39, l. 22, *for* 'St. Neots' *read* 'St. Neot.'

On p. 385 Sir Leslie Stephen is erroneously described as 'President of the Rationalist Press Association.' He was, I believe, merely an honorary member of that body, whose official head, moreover, is not called the President but the Chairman.

THE HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH RATIONALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER XI

THE DISSOLUTION OF PIETISM

COURTLY historians have associated the name of Queen Victoria with a wonderful efflorescence of literature, philosophy, science, and industry in the island kingdom whose crown she wore so long, and at last with such applause. But none have seemed to think it worth determining how much, if any, of those triumphs was due to the influence of the lady who sat in high seclusion on England's throne. Perhaps an answer not wholly satisfactory has been feared. For intellectual curiosity can hardly be reckoned among the great qualities of that illustrious sovereign; nor is it pretended that she offered any particular encouragement to the men and women of genius whose lustre has been reflected on her name. And as it happens the most brilliant outburst of creative originality marks the earlier years of her reign, after which the succeeding decades are characterised by a progressive decline, continued down to a point of almost absolute inanition, recalling a somewhat similar phenomenon in the ages of Augustus and Louis XIV. Thus the Queen's influence, if any, would seem to have been of a deadening rather than of a stimulating order.

But in fact whatever causes may be assigned to the greatness and decline of the Victorian period, they are almost totally disconnected with the personality of the sovereign. I say almost and not wholly, because Queen Victoria, under the influence of her rationalistic German consort, seems long to

have patronised by preference the more liberal-minded among the clergy, seconding, in this respect, the steady policy of her Whig ministers; although her later sympathies are believed to have turned rather in the direction of Ritualism, a debased popular version of the Tractarian Movement. Indirectly also the accession of a young girl to the throne had a certain effect on the intellectual development of the country, although one quite out of relation with the as yet undisclosed qualities of her own mind. Her three predecessors had tended, each in his own way, to bring the royal office into suspicion and contempt, much to the benefit of political radicalism; while the popularity naturally accompanying a blooming, happy, and virtuous princess told for what it was worth on the opposite side, that is in favour of the Conservative reaction—a reaction, be it observed, not least felt by the Whig office-holders from 1837 to 1841.

It is hardly necessary to mention that this reaction had deeper causes than any change in the royal figure-head, and had already begun some years before the change took place. We need not enter into those causes; what concerns us here is rather one of its effects, the temporary eclipse of philosophical radicalism. Macaulay on his return from India humorously remarked that the Radical party seemed to be reduced to Grote and his wife. Under pressure of the reaction, and always inclined to quarrel among themselves, the party had in fact gone to pieces, besides failing to enlist some who had seemed marked out as their natural allies, such as Macaulay himself, and still more Carlyle. Among Sir Robert Peel's opponents none seemed less formidable than the few surviving representatives of Bentham's school.

But the final catastrophe of 1841, seemingly so fatal to Liberals of every shade, was really a most fortunate event for the Liberal cause itself, as distinguished from the party-interests of the hour. Not only did the elections place in power one of the century's greatest reformers, but, what was ultimately of even more importance, they temporarily released the noblest intellects on the progressive side from the comparatively petty political engagements by which they had hitherto been trammelled, leaving them free to produce those memorable works by which the succeeding generation became imbued with a new order of emotions and ideas.

What made the early Victorian period so splendid was in large measure the quantity of energy thus suddenly let loose on philosophy and literature. Among its masterpieces are included, Mill's 'Logic' and his 'Political Economy,' the first volumes of Grote's 'History of Greece,' Carlyle's 'Cromwell,' and the first volumes of Macaulay's 'History of England.' To understand the moral of these works is to recognise the relation in which they stood to the fundamental issue of their age. One organises reason, and another social justice, a third sets before us, cleared from the dust of pedantry and the slime of obscurantist malignity, the chosen people of light and freedom; a fourth and fifth, as against all romanticist illusions, as against all Catholicising velleities, rehabilitate with glowing enthusiasm two Protestant heroes, the Protector and the Liberator of England.

In the case of Grote, Macaulay, Mill, and even Carlyle, the diversion from immediate political interests to history and science is certain. But with the great novelists of the early Victorian period, Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, no such altered direction can be spoken of. In devoting themselves to creative art they did but follow the natural bent of their genius. And the same remark applies with even more force to the great poets of the time, to Tennyson, the Brownings, and Ruskin. Still in these writers also, even in the magnificent prose-lyrist whom I have reckoned among them, declared absolutist as he was, we seem to trace a passion for liberty, progress, reform, which has been denied a vent in direct action on the world, and therefore seeks an outlet in the ideal sphere of imaginative creation. Nor is it a small thing that their energies were left available for that employment, that they were not artificially diverted, as might well have happened in an age of more absorbing political excitement, into the service of party warfare. Such indeed was what actually happened to the only two young men of commanding and many-sided genius who then made a name in Parliament, Disraeli and Gladstone, precisely because they alone could devote their high gifts to the cause of reactionary monopoly.

So much for the political side of the problem. But this sudden uprush of pure intellectual activity cannot be attributed

to one cause alone; and the reader will be prepared to hear that the decline of religious enthusiasm must be counted as another liberating agent. In an earlier chapter I quoted a list of highly distinguished men who, being equally capable of shining in some other profession, gave their services to the Christian ministry during a period extending over twenty-five years, supplemented by a list of laymen, contemporary with them and of not less distinguished abilities, who supported the same cause with ardour and sincerity from without. But the next quarter of a century, from 1840 to 1864, has no such assemblage to show. Among those who then took orders there are still names with other than clerical distinctions to recommend them; but as compared with their predecessors they form a scanty and straggling band. I can only recall the names of Jowett, Mark Pattison, J. A. Froude, Kingsley, Bishop Stubbs, Stopford Brooke, Leslie Stephen, J. R. Green. And what irony does not even this short catalogue convey! Out of the eight, four openly severed their connexion with the Church; two, while remaining within the fold, ended their lives as avowed agnostics; and one enjoyed no great reputation for orthodoxy among his clerical brethren.

In the lay support given to religion there is a parallel falling-off. Gladstone, Lord Shaftesbury, and Lord Selborne have left no successors worth mentioning. Among the middle Victorian poets of the first rank Swinburne and William Morris are atheists, Dante Rossetti an agnostic; and if the devotional element receives a glowing expression from Coventry Patmore and Christina Rossetti, Robert Browning breaks with Christianity, and Tennyson's hold on it becomes remarkably uncertain. Finally Ruskin, who began as a very devout writer, discovers, comparatively early in his literary career, that—to use his own simple language—'the religion in which he had been brought up was not true.'

We have no means at once direct and trustworthy for ascertaining to what depth English society was already penetrated by rationalistic influences in the early Victorian period. But it seems certain that there could have been no sustaining demand for such works as were then offered to the reading public by our foremost thinkers and writers had they not met

as well as guided the taste of the times. We have it on the authority of a rather hostile witness, J. S. Mill, that in 1840 the English mind, although carrying the want of intellectual curiosity to the verge of stupidity, was at length beginning to open to the best ideas of the age.[1] This was said immediately after Carlyle had been delivering his lectures on Hero-worship to enthusiastic London audiences, probably not very different in their composition from those which a dozen years before had listened with equal enthusiasm to his friend Irving's sermons on the approaching end of the world. One may perhaps measure the advance in general enlightenment by the distance between the respective points of view represented by the two northern prophets.

Another rather curious evidence of the decline in religious feeling during the early Victorian period seems to be offered by the morbidly excited, feverish, one might almost say hysterical tone of the most popular literature of the time, traceable also in much of its correspondence, since published, but not originally destined for publication. George Sand's example may have counted for something; but Mrs. Browning and the Brontë sisters are really more passionate as writers than she is; nor in any case could her example have been so effectual had not the chords of English hearts been attuned to the same note. We may be sure that just as the close of the great war set free a quantity of emotion which the pietistic movement immediately appropriated, so also pietism in its decline passed on a perhaps diminished amount of the same energy to literature and life.

The most distinctive product, however, of English literature at that time was not sentiment but satire, unequalled for volume and variety at any other period of history; and this development bears witness also to the new direction men's thoughts had received. There is the same idealism as before; but it has been transferred from heaven to earth, and discharges in a flood of scornful humour the tension produced by its sense of contrast between the dream and the actuality, what in fact with pietists had been the sense of sin. Such a transformation of energy had been witnessed before under Elizabeth, when the people had lost their old religion, and had resigned the direction

[1] 'Correspondance inédite avec Gustave D'Eichthal.'

of their affairs into the keeping of the New Monarchy; and again on a smaller scale when their recovered liberty was taken from them by an oligarchy under Anne, while their Puritan faith passed into the sober rationalism of the latitudinarian divines.

Intellectual economics forbid that a nation should subsist wholly by its own industry working on its own resources. Elizabethan literature and philosophy owed their existence in great measure to importations from Italy, combined with the newly discovered treasures of Greek antiquity, and with the heroic legends of Celtic Britain, for the first time made universally accessible by the printing-press. French influences, aided by a sudden inroad of Irish genius, played a somewhat similar part under the last Stuarts, but with effects proportioned to so much less potent a cause. And we saw in the last two chapters how an influx of Continental philosophy, together with a revival of Scottish tradition, organised by Scottish intellect, came once more to awaken England from her dreamy devotions.

While the decay and dissolution of pietism was hurried on by these external forces, it had been prepared, as we know, by internal anarchy and discord. A staunch company still rallied round the old Evangelicalism which had been the fountain-head of the whole movement, protesting with clear-sighted if unreasoning vehemence against its inevitable drift towards Rome; thus hurrying on the very catastrophe which it would have been their interest to prevent or postpone. Another group, gathering round Arnold, soon found themselves denouncing the German pantheism for which they had prepared the way, as bitterly as they had before denounced the Oxford Malignants. And by another dialectical irony, it so happened that the logician who did most to urge Newman forward on the path to Rome was an Arnoldian whom he had himself converted to the Tractarian creed, the celebrated W. G. Ward.

Elected a Fellow of Balliol in 1834, Ward, although not himself a Rugbean, represented for a time the Rugby spirit at Oxford. But he was also an assiduous student of Bentham and of J. S. Mill, whose articles in the 'London Review' he and his friends eagerly devoured. The logical training acquired in

this school, and perhaps a suspicion of what the philosophical radicals thought about religion, showed him the precipice to which liberal Anglicanism was leading. It seemed to him that a choice must be made between the two extremes of infidelity and faith. Thanks to early impressions received during the pietistic period, his choice inclined strongly to faith. Newman's personal influence did the rest. But Ward in turn acted on Newman, making him more conscious of the dilemma between atheism and the Tridentine Decrees.

Like other ideas of the time, this supposed dilemma was a French importation, having been very distinctly laid down by Bonald,[1] the first and greatest of the Catholic reactionists who attacked the Revolution with weapons borrowed from its own philosophy. Among other loans of this description was the famous theory of development in theology. Priestley, followed by most of the later rationalists, had proclaimed progress towards perfection as the fundamental law of human history; and Bonald appropriated the idea for the benefit of his Church. According to him, the Protestant demand for a return to primitive Christianity is a violent reversal of the natural order of things. Luther's method is one not of progress, but of reaction. Catholicism, on the other hand, contains within itself a principle of growth which in dogma and discipline is carrying it ever nearer to perfection.[2]

As employed by Catholics against Protestants, the theory of development is powerless, since both accept the New Testament as an authoritative and unalterable revelation. To prove that certain beliefs and institutions came into existence gradually and in response to certain requirements of the age, is not to prove that they are eternally true and good; for the same holds of everything that has ever been thought or practised. The real question is what consequences may be deduced from declarations admitted on both sides as authoritative; and Protestants are just as ready as Catholics to accept what seems a legitimate inference from revealed truth. But they will not allow—unless they happen to be Hegelians—that a principle can be developed into the contradictory of itself; and this they contend is what Romanist developments amount to. A

[1] 'Théorie du Pouvoir,' Vol. II., p. 209.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

confusion of fact with right lies at the bottom of the whole argument. It is shown how one belief rose out of another through the natural connexion of ideas, and then by a dexterous substitution the logically lawful is assumed to be identical with the working of psychological law.

Newman, at any rate, moving under the impulse given by Ward, found the method well adapted to his private needs, and wrote a book, which is a mass of sophistry, to justify his transition from the Primitive to the Mediaeval Church, and from the latter to ultramontane Catholicism. There was an attractive air of modern philosophy about it all, for development had become one of the leading categories of contemporary thought. But its introduction into theology marks a stage in the dissolution of pietism; for pietists have in all ages been the great enemies of development, although unconsciously playing a conspicuous part in its machinery. Their tendency is always back to a supposed state of primitive innocence and simplicity, not forward to a state of increased complexity and refinement. Nor has theology apart from pietism any reason to congratulate itself on the advent of this formidable principle, which has come to stay, and in staying to work havoc among all the traditional elements of religious belief. At this moment the idea of development is being used by a powerful school both in the Anglican and Roman communities to sanction just the sort of rationalism which Newman foresaw and denounced as the great danger of the coming period.

By a curious coincidence two of the very years during which Newman was preparing his elaborate justification for the abandonment of his position at Oxford, were spent by a contemporary, and almost a coeval of his own, in applying the idea of development to the more legitimate and fruitful purpose of explaining the history of organic life, and the appearance of man on the earth. This was Robert Chambers of Edinburgh, a partner in the celebrated publishing firm to which literature is so deeply indebted, and himself the author of several valuable books. The most celebrated of these, his epoch-making 'Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation,' appeared in 1844, and was the result of two years' study. It was published anonymously, and extraordinary precautions were used to keep the authorship

a secret in order to avoid the injury that his business would have suffered had Chambers been made personally responsible for the daring speculations which it advocated. His efforts were not entirely successful; but the firm seems to have lost no custom when it became generally known that a work the credit of which had been given, among others, to Prince Albert and Sir Charles Lyell,[1] was really due to a self-taught Edinburgh bookseller.

The 'Vestiges' is now generally associated with an abortive theory of the origin of species, never commanding much respect, and long since eclipsed by the splendid and solid achievement of Charles Darwin. But its historical importance is independent of any particular biological theory, true or false. Chambers was not a man of science; and we may trust the scientific authorities who tell us that he made gross blunders in writing with imperfect knowledge about subjects where the best informed have no immunity from error. But he was, what then counted for more, a philosopher. A predecessor of Herbert Spencer far more than of Darwin, he founded the doctrine of evolution in Britain, and created the atmosphere which made free discussion of man's origin a possibility.

Our author begins with the origin of the solar and stellar systems, and expounds the nebular hypothesis, for which the increasing popularity of astronomy had to a certain extent prepared the public mind. Here we find an interesting reference to the Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte, who had recently endeavoured to support this explanation of the planetary origins by certain mathematical calculations in themselves of no value, but perhaps more contributory to the reputation of his work in this country than its really important ideas. He then gives a sketch of the earth's history extending over a hundred pages. Every change through which the conformation and inorganic constitution of our planet have passed in the course of ages is explained by natural causes, or, as the author, following the fashion of his contemporaries, always calls them, laws. And the succession of organic remains preserved in the fossiliferous strata also reveals a certain order and law. Living beings have always been, as we say now, adapted to their environment;

[1] Introduction to the 12th edition of the 'Vestiges,' by Alexander Ireland, p. xviii.

and as the environment changes, the plants and animals change also. Now the remarkable fact is that forms of life ranking lowest in the botanical and zoological scales, speaking broadly, come first, and are gradually succeeded by more complex forms, until the series closes with man, the highest product of creation, and also the last to appear.

We are next led on to the philosophical interpretation of these remarkable phenomena. The issue lies between two rival theories, the theory of creation by law, and the theory of creation by a number of miraculous interferences with the course of nature. Analogy alone would lead us to decide for law. If, as seems probable, the stars and the solar system have been formed in this way, if, as seems certain, the transformations of the earth's crust may and must be explained by purely physical agencies, ought not the succession of its living inhabitants, nay the first origin of life itself, to be accounted for by the method of development? Nor, on this question, need we trust to analogy alone. Various evidences point to the derivation of higher from lower organisms. There is a unity of composition proper to each great type, such as the Vertebrata, Articulata, etc.; and in a less degree there is a unity of composition running through the whole animal kingdom. Thus each species, so far from presenting the appearance of an isolated creation, is connected with other forms in ever widening circles by peculiarities of structure evincing a common ancestry. For example, the giraffe with its enormously elongated neck, and the pig with almost no neck, have equally, like all other mammalia, seven cervical vertebrae, neither more nor less.

Again, the more advanced animal species present the curious phenomenon of transformed or atrophied organs (survivals), which in the lower species were fully developed, or served a different purpose. In Mammifers gills like those possessed by fish exist and act at any early stage of the foetal state, but afterwards disappear. 'In fishes the lung-structure appears in the rudimentary form of an air-bladder. . . . The whale, in embryo, shows the rudiments of teeth;' and the human embryo has a rudimentary tail.[1]

Embryology supplies a still stronger argument. 'The

[1] 'Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation,' pp. 197–200 (fourth ed., 1845).

human embryo passes through the whole space representing the invertebrate animals in the first month.'[1] 'In the reproduction of the higher animals, the new being passes through stages in which it is successively fish-like and reptile-like.'[2] According to Dr. Fletcher, 'as the brain of every tribe of animals appears to pass, during its development, in succession through the types of all those below it, so the brain of man passes through the types of those of every tribe in the creation.'[3]

Finally, geographical distribution offers a strong presumption against the hypothesis of special creation and for the hypothesis of development. For in numerous instances, we find an environment excellently suited to the higher plants and animals, but peopled only by those of a lower grade, simply because the conditions of development did not there present themselves.[4]

It will be seen by these rapid indications that Chambers had grasped the various lines of reasoning by which the theory of evolution has since been established and has won universal acceptance. No doubt, as I have said, he errs on points of detail, besides showing a strange absence of the critical spirit, as when he gravely tells of dogs being taught to play at dominoes;[5] although in this respect he has been outdone by Romanes, a professional biologist, with his stories of talking parrots. But the all-important fact remains that the author of the 'Vestiges' saw what Baer, Agassiz, Sedgwick, and Murchison were blind to and denied till the day of their death, and that he boldly proclaimed what Owen, while acknowledging it in private, was too timid or too jealous to confess—the origin of organic species by modification of pre-existing types.

It must, however, be recorded to the credit of that age that the 'Vestiges' was not, as has been confidently stated, 'unanimously condemned by men of science.'[6] Owen, when pressed to write a hostile criticism of the book, refused to do so; and in writing to thank the author for a presentation copy, expressed a certain sympathy with his views; acknowledging also, while he points out some errors, that 'on the whole the

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 153. [2] P. 216. [3] P. 233.
[4] Pp. 278–85. [5] P. 345.
[6] 'Life of Adam Sedgwick,' Vol. II., p. 82.

zoology and anatomy of the work is correct.'[1] And a greater than Owen, Mr. A. R. Wallace, was filled by its perusal with thoughts that left him no rest until he had worked out the theory of the origin of species by natural selection.

Evolution is one thing and the cause of evolution is another. Darwin is sometimes credited with the whole doctrine because he was the first, with Wallace, to offer a general explanation of the process, so far at least as it concerns organic life, which commended itself to scientific minds as in consonance with the rules of inductive logic. But the all-sufficiency of natural selection, and even its dynamic power to transmute species, have been questioned by such high authorities that no more than the fact of evolution, apart from its explanation, can even now be regarded as certain. Public opinion, however, is so constituted that people in general can hardly be induced to accept the fact as proved unless the evidence for it be accompanied by a more or less adequate explanation, by the suggestion of a cause which may or may not be sufficient to account for it as a natural process like reproduction or growth.

Robert Chambers had such an explanation to offer—as it happened a wholly illusory explanation—but one without which his book might have failed to attract attention, and therefore to effect that great change in public opinion which makes it so important. It constituted, indeed, his sole claim to originality, and without originality, or the show of it, a rehearing of old truths cannot be obtained. His theory was that every now and then, at wide intervals of time, the foetus of some animal is advanced a step in the scale of organic perfection, and has thus become the starting-point of a new and higher species. Thus the embryo of a very superior fish would develop into that of a very low reptile, and the embryo of an advanced reptile into a very imperfect bird or mammal, and similarly within the mammalian series itself, as well as, at a far earlier period, among the invertebrate ancestors of the fishes; the metamorphoses of insects and amphibia being adduced as an illustration of the process.

This theory was suggested by Baer's discoveries in embryo-

[1] 'Life of Richard Owen,' Vol. I., p. 251.

logy, already mentioned as part of the evidence for the fact of organic evolution. Baer's law has that value because the series of differentiations through which the individual passes in the course of its embryonic development are only intelligible as an abridged reproduction of the metamorphoses experienced by its ancestors. But to treat an effect of evolution as its cause and explanation is a sin against scientific method, and is in fact reasoning in a circle. Were such forward leaps on the part of the embryo actually to occur, they would, of course, be accepted as facts, but facts which, so far from explaining anything, would themselves call for an explanation; and none is forthcoming in the 'Vestiges,' any more than any evidence of the alleged fact.

In assuming a tendency towards higher perfection as something quite natural and to be expected, Chambers seems to have been determined by the current ideas of his age. 'Progress of the Species' was then in all men's mouths. It still lives for us in Tennyson's jubilant anticipations, as well as in Carlyle's bitter mockery of the hackneyed phrase. And even Carlyle at the bottom of his heart was not less hopeful than the rest of the world, and not less disposed to identify progress with increased material prosperity; taking about as much of Goethe's idealism as would fit into the standards of Burns.

Thus the idea of progress, whence the idea of evolution has itself been evolved, was a gift from the philosophy of human nature to the philosophy of all nature; and the fact is worth noting. For the relation between the two studies is now most generally conceived in the reverse order, as if ethics and sociology were the humble followers of physical science rather than its inspirers and guides. We shall see hereafter how this dependence of the lower on the higher studies continued, and how biology was rescued from apparently insuperable difficulties by a timely application of economic law to the problem of morphological variation.

Contemporary theologians, not without good reason, regarded the author of the 'Vestiges' as a dangerous enemy. But Robert Chambers, although, as would seem, far from being an orthodox believer, remained a devout theist, and steadily upheld the argument from design. It was not about the fact of

creation but about the mode that he differed from his theological opponents. They assumed that every single animal and vegetable species was the result of a miraculous interference with the ordinary course of nature; he tried to show that the world constituted one vast self-acting machine by which everything from stellar systems to animalculae was turned out as it was required with universal and undeviating regularity. And he considered that the production of such a machine did more credit to the divine wisdom and power, as it certainly would do more credit to a human artificer, than a state of things necessitating a perpetual readjustment of means to ends. His theory also left the arguments from final causes stronger than before. For just as from a machine-made article we infer the existence of a machinist with not less but rather more confidence than the existence of a watch-maker from a watch, so a mammalian which bears traces of an ingenious contrivance for developing it from a fish ought to carry home more strongly than before the conviction that it has been planned by a conscious intelligence.

This point of view will prepare us to appreciate in due time the immense philosophical revolution effected by Spencer and Darwin. But the implied distinction was not so obvious then as it is now. With an intuition above logic the public felt that development under any form was the natural enemy of theology; and what had hitherto been the reigning religion felt itself particularly threatened by the theory of the 'Vestiges.' Pietism lives on special providences; and a God who, as Carlyle put it, 'does nothing,' or, as Goethe said, 'lets the world run round his finger,' soon comes to be looked on by his devotees as no God at all. Moreover, from the teleological point of view, certain arguments lately put forward with undoubting confidence as solid additions to natural theology would be annihilated if the new theory were true. I have already quoted Brougham's exulting reference to Cuvier's 'demonstration' that a miraculous 'suspension of the laws of nature, *i.e.* the creation of certain species, did once (*sic*) take place subsequent to the creation of the world.'[1] And another apologist, De Quincey, appeals not only to the origin of man but also to the origin of life on the earth as an event impossible

[1] 'Macvey Napier's Correspondence,' p. 337.

without the exercise of supernatural force.[1] Now, the 'Vestiges,' not content with asserting the development of men from monkeys, maintained also that the most primitive forms of life had arisen, probably through electrical action, from their inorganic elements; appealing in support of this thesis to the then celebrated experiments of Crosse and Weekes.[2]

In more modern times theologians have contrived to satisfy themselves that the spirituality of the soul and the immortality of man are perfectly compatible with the derivation of the human body from an ascidian, or even some much more elementary being produced by chemical forces from inorganic matter. Sixty years ago such theories as those of Chambers passed for materialism, and were regarded with not less horror than atheism, from which indeed they seemed practically indistinguishable. Perhaps also the suggestion that development need not necessarily close with man, and that 'the human animal,' as people were beginning to call him, might some day be superseded—or domesticated—by a creature as much superior to him as he is to the baboon, excited some alarm among the respectable classes. At any rate, the 'Vestiges' raised a storm; and as the official teaching of science was monopolised by the clergy, or by professors who were content to be the humble servants of the clergy, the whole weight of scientific authority was used to crush it. Sedgwick, the Cambridge geologist, who was also a Low Church clergyman, very willingly undertook the task of demolition, and wrote a very long and ponderous criticism of the work for the 'Edinburgh Review.' Scientific errors on the part of this particular writer are no doubt corrected, and hasty inferences exposed. But the argument as a whole is directed against the general theory of organic development rather than against the version of it presented by the 'Vestiges.' The facts of classification and of embryology are declared to give it no support. The facts of geology are declared to contradict it. Time has shown that the specialist was wrong, and that the philosopher was right. It does not seem that the attack, which was of a rather brutal kind, did its victim any harm. Chambers continued to publish new editions with the necessary corrections on points of detail, thus keeping the question of

[1] 'Works,' Vol. VII., p. 241.

[2] 'Vestiges,' p. 189.

Law *versus* Miracle alive until it was ripe for Darwin's solution.

In private Sedgwick used far more violent language about the book and its author than that which was thought suitable for the pages of the 'Edinburgh Review.' 'From the bottom of my soul,' he writes to Macvey Napier, 'I loathe and detest the Vestiges. 'Tis a rank pill of assafoetida and arsenic, covered with gold-leaf . . . a filthy abortion.'[1] His (Chambers's) views 'are the favourites of the ultra-infidel school of France.'[2] 'The doctrine of a gradual transmutation of species I utterly abominate, and I only abominate it because I believe it to be utterly untrue.'[3] Again, writing to Agassiz, he complains that 'the convictions of Geoffroy St. Hilaire and his dark school seem to be gaining ground in England. I detest them because I think them untrue.'[4] Convictions so strongly tinctured with hate and disgust are generally of religious origin. Agassiz, who agreed with Sedgwick in upholding the fixity of species, but, as would seem, on purely scientific grounds, politely cautions his correspondent against importing such considerations into the controversy. He deprecates 'the exaggeration of religious fanaticism, borrowing fragments from science imperfectly, or not at all, understood, and then making use of them to prescribe to scientific men what they are allowed to see or to find in nature.'[5]

Religious fanaticism was indeed disorganising science by setting its professors at variance with one another, and reducing to silence some, like Owen, whose natural affinities were entirely with the progressive party; while it induced others, like Hugh Miller, to expend their energies in the chimerical attempt to reconcile the new truths with the old mythology. Whether any outlet could conceivably have been found for the expanding thought of England other than what the course of events actually provided is impossible to tell. Our business, at any rate, is with actual occurrences rather than with contingencies; and in point of fact obstructive dogmatism was pushed aside by direct criticism of its assumptions far

[1] 'Macvey Napier's Correspondence,' p. 492.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 491.
[3] P. 490.
[4] 'Life of Sedgwick,' Vol. II., p. 86.
[5] 'Life of Agassiz,' Vol. I., p. 231.

more than by the spontaneous growth of physical knowledge.

In 1845, after a prolonged agony of four years, the Oxford Movement came to an end with the secession of its chief to the Roman Catholic Church. Long before that date its logical basis had been undermined by the influence of Arnold's teaching on the younger generation at Oxford, and by the spread of Continental speculations among the educated classes over the whole country. For the moment Evangelicalism seemed to be the school which stood to win most by the Tractarian collapse. Its adherents had all along predicted what the result of the Movement would be, and they naturally assumed that their own creed was the only available alternative for a people whose traditional detestation of Popery seemed the least equivocal element of the situation. Moreover—what could hardly have been said half a century earlier—they counted a fair number of intellectual and scholarly writers among their number, such as Sir James Stephen, Isaac Taylor, Henry Rogers, and Robert Alfred Vaughan. Contributions from them began to appear in the 'Edinburgh,' formerly notorious for its veiled scepticism; at their head stood the most philanthropic statesman of the age, Lord Ashley; and the most resplendent literary genius of the new generation, John Ruskin, had been nursed on their tenets. Over the Nonconformists their control was complete; and they probably constituted a majority in the Church of England, made still more powerful by party discipline, wealth, and aristocratic connexions. Scotland and Ireland supplied them with eloquent preachers; and at Cambridge, since Simeon's time, whatever piety existed bore their stamp.

But as Evangelicalism had given the Oxford Movement its leader, so now rationalism drew its most prominent champion from the same school and from the same gifted family. Hardly had the elder Newman vanished into the temporary obscurity of the Roman priesthood, when the paler star of his brother Francis rose above the horizon in the opposite quarter of the English theological heaven. For years to come the great issue between reason and faith almost resolved itself into a personal controversy between Francis Newman and the Evangelical party.

I have called the younger Newman a champion of rationalism. And in point of fact he was forced into that position by circumstances; but I must not be understood to imply that he was a rationalist in the complete sense, or indeed in any sense that would give reason a preponderance over faith. With him, as with his brother, the dominant trait was a morbidly introspective mysticism, allied in both with the keenest dialectical ability. Both seem to have been rather solitary in their habits, and of rather difficult tempers, but the future Cardinal was more susceptible to external influences, endowed with a far richer poetical faculty, and therefore far more prone to work up the objects and incidents of everyday life into a religious romance, a supernatural scheme for guiding his course to some unknown but surely predestined end. His ready sympathy with others and insight into their needs marked him out as a born leader of men, but a leader impelled from behind and drawn towards ancient ideals rather than a directing and organising head, not to say a truly creative genius. Francis, on the other hand, seems neither to have possessed any personal magnetism, nor to have been influenced or affected as his brother was by persons and things. Their mother called him 'a piece of adamant.'[1] And a friend of the family tells us that the contrast was plainly marked in their letters from abroad. For while 'the eldest had so much poetry, love of scenery and association of place and country, and domestic and filial affection, these qualities appeared wanting in his brother, who would have passed Jerusalem and Nazareth without turning aside to look on them or the most beautiful object in nature, or at all events would not deign to mention them, nor to cast any longing lingering look to his home.'[2] And long afterwards, when thrown with more congenial associates, such as James Martineau, he is described as working out his own conclusions in solitary thought and study. Such is the mystic whose decisive experiences come from within, not from the interpretation of what is presented to him by nature and life.

Like his brother, the younger Newman has left us a deeply interesting account of the process by which his religious

[1] 'J. H. Newman's Correspondence,' Vol. I., p. 118.
[2] 'Autobiography of Isaac Williams,' pp. 59–60.

opinions were gradually determined, and finally given a form widely different from the Evangelical creed of his youth. Starting with 'an unhesitating unconditional acceptance of whatever is found in the Bible,'[1] he could not reconcile either the Articles of the Anglican Church or the Sabbatarianism of his Evangelical teachers with the letter of Scripture, and consequently had to abandon his original intention of taking orders. At no time was he in sympathy with the Tractarian movement. For the more he found out about modern bishops and ancient Fathers of the Church, the less he felt disposed to look up to the one, or to look back to the others, as authorities in matters of religion.

In the course of a fifteen months' residence in Ireland (1829–30) he made the acquaintance of a fanatical Irish clergyman,[2] under whose influence—the only personal influence, as would seem, of his life—he passed to the extreme of the then epidemic pietism. The practical result was that he went out as a missionary to Bagdad to convert the Mohammedans to Christianity. Experience soon taught the young enthusiast that the religious convictions of ignorant believers are not affected by argument. A carpenter at Aleppo answered him as a primitive Christian might have answered an unbelieving Greek philosopher. God had given the English many blessings, but had withheld from them a knowledge of saving truth.

Meanwhile an unremitting study of the New Testament (perhaps aided by the monotheistic atmosphere of the East) convinced him that whatever John and Paul thought about Christ's divinity, they did not teach the doctrine of three co-equal Persons in a triune God. He discussed the subject with his friends, and on returning to England found himself avoided and denounced as a heretic. The elder Newman, hearing that Frank had sometimes delivered addresses to small private religious meetings, felt bound to give up the acquaintance of one who thus presumed to encroach on the priestly office. Altogether, pious people behaved so badly as to convince the

[1] 'Phases of Faith,' by F. W. Newman, p. 1.

[2] This clergyman seems to have been no other than John Nelson Darby, founder of the Darbyites, a branch of the 'Plymouth Brethren.' See Mr. Francis Gribble's article on F. W. Newman in the 'Fortnightly Review' for July, 1905. Darby was of English birth, but held a curacy in Wicklow for a short time.

young man that there is no necessary connexion between religion and morality.

The next step was to set morality in judgment on dogma. Eternal punishment was naturally condemned before that tribunal; and a Unitarian treatise on the subject suggested that the Scriptural phrases which seemed to countenance it may mean no more than long-continued torment. But why should even so much useless suffering be inflicted? Or, if hell merely meant destruction, why should any one be miraculously raised from the dead in order to be again annihilated?[1] It is inconsistent to talk as if religion were not amenable to such criticism. Christ's hearers must have had an independent power of distinguishing between right and wrong before they knew that 'his conduct was holy and his doctrine good.'[2]

As an additional complication, intellectual difficulties about Christ's divinity ran up into ethical problems. From a religious point of view, what demands the belief in an incarnate God is the alleged necessity of providing a superhuman victim to bear the punishment justly due to the sins of mankind. But the doctrine of vicarious suffering seems not to be Scriptural, and is beyond doubt grossly immoral. According to the sacred writers, Christ made atonement for sin by his violent death, not by the torments that accompanied it. Yet the death of a God is quite unintelligible; nor, to tell the truth, has the subject any interest for religious belief. It is enough to know that God has forgiven my sins without knowing by what machinery he has enabled himself to forgive them.

Here we may pause to note the singularly abstract and unsympathetic mode of thought betrayed by the whole argument as above set forth. So great is the chasm between God and mortal man that religious belief has always endeavoured to fill it up by the conception of a suffering and dying divinity; and Christianity in particular has known how to use this conception with extraordinary effect, by representing the sacrifice as a proof of God's love for man. In this way a strong emotion of gratitude is excited and made available as a motive for lifelong self-dedication to his service, a service of devotion

[1] 'Phases of Faith,' p. 49.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

to good. All hearts are not equally open to such an appeal, and the appeal itself involves a mystery not acceptable to the logical understanding. But it seems strange enough that our critic did not, in this instance, recognise the more potent logic of feeling as a determinant of religious belief in others if not in himself.

If the doctrine of the Atonement seemed to our enquirer a Calvinistic misinterpretation of Scripture, so also did the correlative doctrine of Original Sin and the Fall. What Adam's disobedience entailed on his descendants, according to St. Paul, was not corruption but death. And in fact when we yield to temptation we are doing simply what Adam did, and are no more corrupt than he was. Newman writes as if his argument struck at Calvinism only; but in truth it applies equally to Coleridge's theology, and to the very starting-point of the Tractarians when they separated themselves from the Evangelical movement.

After this destructive action on dogma as the traditional interpretation of Scripture, reason went on to exercise a similar action on the authority of Scripture itself. The genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke were found to be not only irrelevant but also irreconcilable with one another, and with Old Testament history. On other points also the Evangelists are shown to be inconsistent with one another, and inaccurate in reporting historical occurrences; while the statements in Genesis on which St. Paul founds his theology are contradicted by physical science. It is customary for apologists to evade such difficulties by distinguishing between scientific and spiritual truth. But no such subterfuge is available when Scriptural sanction is given to actions condemned by our moral sentiment, as with the murder of Sisera and the intended sacrifice of Isaac. And 'to allege that our moral faculties are not to judge is to annihilate the evidences for Christianity.'[1]

These and other objections, now universally familiar and generally admitted, raised the question of the authority on which the Old Testament is accepted as true. As it is accepted on the authority of the New Testament writers, an examination into their competence to deal with the Hebrew Scriptures is suggested. But the palpable misinterpretations with which the

[1] 'Phases of Faith,' p. 70.

Gospels, Acts, and Epistles are crowded will not allow us to take their decision on the value and credibility of a book which it is clear that they did not perfectly understand. In appealing to the Old Testament as a standard of truth, they merely reproduce the current ideas of their age without claiming to have received any special revelation in reference to its authority. Nor indeed do the Evangelists profess to be divinely inspired on any point; St. Luke even implying that he had none but human sources of information. Moreover, they shared the superstitious belief of their time, that various diseases now known to be of purely natural origin were due to demoniacal possession; and under the influence of that belief they made themselves responsible for misstatements and fictions highly prejudicial to their credit as historians.

Through the breach made by the stories of demoniacal possession in the trustworthiness of Biblical marvels, a flood of difficulties poured in, leading to a general rejection of the numerous miracles related in both Testaments which seemed unmoral, grotesque, or useless.

At the same time a critical analysis of the Pentateuch, begun under German guidance, convinced Newman that the so-called Mosaic books are conglomerates formed out of older materials, inartistically and mechanically pieced together; and that the Deuteronomic law was 'first compiled, or at least first produced and made authoritative to the (Jewish) nation, in the reign of Josiah.'[1] De Wette is mentioned as the writer who was found most helpful in reaching these conclusions, now become the common property of the educated classes in England. It would appear that they were formed not later than the year 1838.

Other canonical books were bereft of their authority by considerations which it would be tedious to relate. Nevertheless, what seemed to Francis Newman the central facts of Christianity still remained unshaken; just as his brother at the very same time was still clinging to his belief in the Apostolic authority of the Anglican Church, after its logical foundation had been undermined in all directions.

Further study showed that the founders of Christianity differed as much from us in their methods of reasoning as in

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 83–4.

their astronomy and physiology. They accepted dreams or visionary apparitions as a sufficient sanction for acts so immoral that we should not believe them to have been commanded by a perfectly good Being on the strength of any evidence whatever. They accepted doctrines as divinely revealed, on the evidence of miracles which we should regard as insufficient attestations of a creed opposed to Christianity. They accepted the miracles themselves as genuine, without critically sifting the sources of illusion. And finally, their whole view of the relation between faith and miracles is uncertain and vacillating. But so also is the attitude of the modern apologist, with his occasional appeal to moral grounds of faith, which really supersedes the evidence of miracles altogether.

These arguments are met by a reference to the moral miracles wrought by the Bible as a triumphant attestation of its claim to a supernatural origin. Newman himself had long been persuaded that it had brought about the Protestant Reformation. But he subsequently came to see how large a part the revival of learning had played in that event, and generally in the promotion of a more spiritual religion. According to him, the superiority of Protestant to Roman Catholic countries (a principle at that time axiomatic with all English writers) is due not to the Bible, but to their freer intellectual life.

As little is the spread of Christianity a proof of its supernatural origin. After gaining its first adherents, as other religions have gained theirs, by the attraction of its moral superiority over the established religion, it was then embraced for their own ends by the rulers of the Roman empire, and imposed on the mass of the people by military force; the same means being subsequently employed by Charlemagne for the conversion of the conquered Teutonic tribes.

The moral advantages accruing from Christianity have also been cited as proof of its divinity. But here again there is much exaggeration. That it has raised woman does not seem to be true. In Southern Europe the position of women has remained what it was in Pagan antiquity, while the respect paid to them in northern countries is an inheritance from the old German heathens. On the other hand, the teaching of the early Christian writers, from St. Paul downwards, in so far as it discountenances marriage and glorifies virginity, is distinctly

degrading to the female sex.[1] Nor can the abolition of slavery be claimed as a distinctively Christian achievement. There is not a word against slavery in the New Testament; on the contrary, St. Paul recognises it as a legitimate social institution. Any zeal for enfranchisement shown by the mediaeval Church arose from a dislike for the enslavement of Christians, not from regard for human rights as such; just as in Mohammedan countries it has been customary to emancipate the slaves who embrace Islam. 'In later times the first public act against slavery came from republican France in the madness of atheistic enthusiasm.'[2] In Britain the unorthodox Quakers have been the principal abolitionists. Generally speaking, the New Testament ignores the rights of men and of nations, while laying down the principles of non-resistance so absolutely 'as practically to throw its entire weight into the scale of tyranny.'[3] Finally, the Bible nowhere preaches religious toleration, while it contains various passages which have not unreasonably been used as a justification of persecution.

The arguments for Christianity as a moral miracle are still popular, and therefore Newman's criticisms on them still retain a good deal of their original interest. But the argument from prophecy, which comes next in order, has vanished so completely from educated controversy that there is some difficulty in understanding how it could ever have been valued as a defence of revelation. It is summarily but sufficiently dealt with. The Messianic predictions of the Old Testament stand in no assignable relation to the history of Jesus. More generally, whenever things alleged to have been predicted, whether in the Old or the New Testament, did actually come to pass, there is evidence that the prophecies were forged after the event, or else they are such as could have been foreseen without supernatural assistance; while in some instances the prediction has been completely falsified.

Dr. Arnold, whom Newman consulted about some of his difficulties, agreed with him in not looking on the Synoptic Gospels as first-rate historical sources. On the other hand, he

[1] On this point Newman's whole argument has since been confirmed by the more searching investigations of Mr. McCabe in his 'Religion of Woman.'

[2] 'Phases of Faith,' p. 108.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

had a high opinion of St. John's Gospel as the work of an eye-witness on whose testimony the main strength of Christianity could be safely rested. After acquiescing for some time in this opinion, Newman found reason to doubt it. Close resemblances of style between the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles seemed to show with certainty that the discourses which the Evangelist put into the mouth of Jesus are really his own composition. This awakens doubts of his veracity as a historian of events; and the doubts are confirmed by examination. His Gospel contains two stupendous miracles, the resurrection of Lazarus, and the giving sight to a man born blind, related so circumstantially as to make them, in Arnold's opinion, grand and unassailable bulwarks of Christianity. But had such miracles been actually wrought, it is incredible that the other Evangelists should not have mentioned them. Thus the stories rest on the unsupported evidence of John, with a weighty presumption against it. He may not have been an intentional deceiver. But he seems to have claimed for himself the gift of a supernatural memory by which forgotten events could be recalled. And he may have mistaken a mere reverie of his own in old age for such a resuscitation of unremembered episodes in his Master's life. However this may be, John remains a less trustworthy source than the Synoptics for the history of Jesus.

Our author's last remaining dependence for belief in supernatural Christianity was on St. Paul. But Paul gives the measure of his own trustworthiness as regards the miraculous by the facile credence he gives to the gift of tongues. To all appearances the mysterious vocables uttered by certain members of the Church of Corinth were on a par with similar performances in Edward Irving's congregation, and deserve to be treated with no more respect. Moreover, Paul knew and cared very little about the earthly life of Jesus, in whom he came to believe through an internal revelation; and he places this vision of his own on a level with the appearances witnessed by the disciples. If his notions of evidence are so lax, what can we expect from the rest?

Many modern religionists, including such Unitarians as James Martineau, would accept the foregoing arguments as valid, and would even push their historical scepticism a good deal further than Newman. But they still claim the title of

Christians on the strength of their belief that God has once for all revealed himself to man as a morally perfect being in the person of Jesus Christ. Newman found himself unable to share this belief. Even in his Evangelical days he had never been interested in the historical Christ, nor felt the need of a Mediator. And now that the immediate self-revelation of God to the soul, cleared from all compromising historical associations, had become his sole religion, he felt the need less than ever. Nor on any ground could he accept the sinlessness of Jesus as an article of faith. Human imperfection is an admitted fact, the universality of which admits no exception even when it cannot be directly demonstrated in a particular instance. But in the case of Jesus actual evidence of imperfection is forthcoming. It consists in his habitual practice of setting himself up as a religious authority, and then 'purposely adopting an enigmatic and pretentious style of teaching,' in order to maintain that character when pressed with difficult questions.[1] Finally, he puts forward a claim to be the Messiah, and thus gets himself into an untenable position, leaving no alternative between retractation and death. He chooses the latter, and brings it on himself by exasperating attacks on the ruling classes, attacks so violent as to turn the multitude, which hitherto had sided with him, against him. Such conduct, in the opinion of his critic, was neither laudable nor justifiable.

Neither is it true to say that Jesus founded spiritual religion. If our information be correct, he always insisted on the observance of the Mosaic law, and even intensified its obligations by preaching the duty of communism. 'The spiritual side of Christianity, inherited from the Hebrew psalmists, *not* from Jesus, was diffused beyond Judaism first by the Jewish Synagogues, next by the school of Paul, to whom the school of Jesus was in fixed opposition, preaching works and the law, while Paul preached the spirit and faith.'[2]

I have given a somewhat extended analysis of Francis Newman's arguments, partly because they constitute the most formidable direct attack ever made against Christianity in England, and partly because of their immense historical

[1] 'Phases of Faith,' p. 153.

[2] 'Miscellanies,' by F. W. Newman, pp. 138–9.

importance, published, as they were, at a critical period in the intellectual life of the nation. When 'Phases of Faith' appeared, discontent was simmering in all directions, but no controversialist had as yet come forward to canvas the popular creed point by point, and to reject all the most prominent dogmas that brought it into collision with the new physical science, the new historical criticism, and the moral principles which, though not new, had been temporarily darkened by the pietistic revival. Carlyle had not cared, Grote and Mill had not dared to publish their opinion of the reigning religion; Charles Hennell had spoken without the authority of a scholar. Francis Newman was a scholar armed at all points, whose competence none could deny; and not only a scholar, but a master of clear and impressive language, the apt vehicle for a masculine, straightforward logic which puts the tortuous sophistry of his brother to shame. And his moral was even higher than his intellectual authority. A knight-errant of the spirit, without fear and without reproach, he enjoyed a reputation for purity and self-devotion on which no calumny could breathe. George Eliot called him 'Saint Francis'; James Martineau and his circle regarded him with venerating affection. It was useless to contend that he had no knowledge of vital religion, when but for an accident his name might have been enrolled among its martyrs, or that he had not given it a fair trial, when his abandonment of Christianity was shown to have been preceded by years of anxious meditation. Like his friend John Sterling, he supplied a practical refutation of the elder Newman's doctrine, that those who reject Biblical or priestly infallibility must have begun by rejecting the authority of their own consciences.

These were important advantages; but their enumeration does not exhaust the chief points of Newman's position, nor perhaps do they represent its chief strength. His opponents might call him an infidel, but they could not call him a sceptic. Although a rationalist in the sense of applying reason to the destructive criticism of religious belief, he did not write from a purely negative standpoint, but claimed, like the deists of the earlier eighteenth century, to have preserved the essential core of religion freed from accidental superstitions. At the same time he was not, what his opponents sometimes called him, a

deist. With perfect justice he distinguished his own theism as a living personal faith from the abstract intellectual admission of a Supreme Being. In fact the two creeds differed very much as their antecedents had differed. Deism sprang from Puritanism, from a religion of the law, theism from the Wesleyan revival, from a religion of the Gospel, of the emotions. It represented Pietism divorced from history and reduced to its simplest elements.

Personal religion of this kind rests mainly on mysticism ; and the younger Newman, as I have said, had a mystical element in his composition. Mysticism has a literary tradition leading its adepts to nourish their thoughts of the unseen on the writings of their predecessors, especially such as excelled them in imagination or emotional fervour. Hence Francis Newman set a high value on the more spiritual portions of the Old and New Testaments, much to the scandal of his orthodox antagonists. It would be little to say that those persons habitually treated the Bible as one Book ; for such a view does not absolutely exclude criticism and selection. They looked on it as a higher organic unity, a complex of organs, none of which can be excised without vital injury to the remainder ; or, better still, as a highly unstable chemical compound, which is exploded and destroyed by giving a blow to any particular part. This view is itself one of the methods of theological belief, and has been already described under the name of intellectual ophelism. I need hardly say that this sort of polemics has gone completely out of fashion, or that it has been succeeded by an opposite, though not necessarily less dishonest style of apologetics, in which alleged concessions play a not less important part than was played by alleged plagiarisms half a century ago. But to understand the intense hostility aroused by ethical theism and its quotations from the jealously guarded literature of Judaism, it is important to recall an almost forgotten phase of controversial pharisaism.

A 'History of the Hebrew Monarchy' published by Newman in 1847 was the first open announcement of his matured religious convictions, and also the starting-point of a continuous rationalistic criticism exercised on the popular religious beliefs by the keenest and best informed intellects of

England. No such professional restraints and no such dread of public opinion as those which had hampered Milman operated on the new historian. As a contribution to science it would, of course, be absurd to compare his unpretending volume with Niebuhr's 'History of Rome.' But his general attitude towards tradition presents some analogies with Niebuhr's, and is similarly related to the more revolutionary methods of a later school. Stories are repeated in good faith whose fictitious character has since been generally recognised, and various compositions are still ascribed to legendary authors dating many centuries before they were written, who would probably have failed to understand a single word of the language put into their mouths.

As a consequence of this imperfect criticism, Newman considerably antedates the rise of Hebrew monotheism, whose natural growth it is one of his objects to trace. But anachronisms of this kind are of no importance as compared with the vital point that he did represent the religion of Israel as a growth, and that he studied its evolution in the prophetic books instead of in the forged priestly legislation attributed to Moses. And just as Niebuhr had his attention drawn to the conflict between the patricians and plebeians as the centre and key of early Roman history, by the contemporary experience of revolutionary Europe, so also we can see that the great conflict passing before his eyes between Evangelical and Tractarian Christianity led Francis Newman to re-read Hebrew history in the light of evidence to the existence of a similar conflict supplied by the prophets and chroniclers of Israel. At any rate, working under the best German guidance then available, he struck into the direct path of modern research, and his method is that which has since led to results so well established that they are accepted by nearly all religious schools.

At the time Newman's criticism, moderate as it now appears, gave bitter offence, aggravated perhaps by his judicial tone. He was neither a Voltaire nor a Paine; and the pure theism of the great Hebrew writers would tend, if anything, to prejudice him in favour of the people to whose genius they gave the highest expression. Whatever partisanship he betrays—and sixty years ago an English historian could hardly help taking sides—is against the priesthood, and might have met with some

sympathy on that score among the Evangelicals and Nonconformists. Yet it was among these, not among his brother's disciples, that Newman's most malignant assailants were found. A work which implicitly denied Biblical infallibility, miracles, and supernatural predictions, must, they thought—or affected to think—be written with the sole object of damaging the Bible, and the Bible had become the sole basis of their faith. The usual weapon of orthodox controversialists, misrepresentation, was freely employed, seconded in this instance by downright falsehood. Whether the writer was or was not injured, rationalism could not but gain from such a style of controversy, for it drew attention to the negative and destructive side of what was honestly put forward as a contribution to positive knowledge and pure religion.

Two years afterwards Newman published his most popular work, 'The Soul: Her Sorrows and Her Aspirations.' By the soul is not meant the entire conscious life of man, but 'that side of human nature upon (*sic*) which we are in contact with the Infinite, and with God, the Infinite Personality.'[1] He who claims such a faculty shares to a certain extent the pretensions of mysticism; and if the analysis of mysticism offered in the first chapter of this work be correct, he mistakes the survival of beliefs first accepted on authority, for truths revealed by an inner sense. Newman himself would perhaps have repudiated the title; he avoids the language of mysticism, and habitually appeals to the common reason. His Personal Infinite is proved by the argument from design; and the emotions directed towards it are described as generalised from those experienced by a child in reference to wise, good, and loving parents. But the logical right so to generalise seems to be given by a special faculty which is not reason, by the soul as a power of apprehending the Infinite. Such an assumption was greatly facilitated by the kindred assumption, then generally current, of conscience as an organ of specific information enabling us to discriminate between the value of different motives, quite apart from their relation to pleasure and pain. Now the soul, we are told, is to things spiritual what the conscience is to things moral; and both, in highly cultivated minds, have a certainty like that belonging to the perceptions of touch and sight.

[1] *Op. cit.*, Preface, p. v.

Again, conscience, according to Newman, involves freewill, without which morality could not exist; and the consciousness of active originating will in ourselves is what alone suggests and justifies 'the idea of a mighty Will pervading nature';[1] the evidence of design coming in as a corroboration.

With still more summary dogmatism we are informed that 'to conceive of God at all as an intelligent existence and not regard him as morally more perfect than man is obviously absurd.'[2] All this talk about a consciousness of the infinite, whether called soul or anything else, seems to be suggested by a crude analogy with our inability to conceive space and time as other than unbounded. Unfortunately for its religious value, Spinoza was led by the same analogy to a system of necessarian pantheism. Only the homogeneous can be thought of as infinite. The self-distinction and opposition of object to subject implied by personality excludes such an idea; and the smooth continuity implied by space and time excludes freewill.

We have seen that with those more advanced rationalists who rejected freewill the sense of sin necessarily disappeared, and with it the whole popular theology, Evangelical, Tractarian, and Arnoldian alike. Francis Newman, being no determinist, could not rid himself of the incubus on such easy terms; nor did it pass away when the story of the Fall was proved by historical criticism and common sense to be a myth. For apart from historical religion, personal experience bore witness to a consciousness of guilt in the believing soul, accompanied by a sense of alienation from the just and holy God. There could be no question now of atonement through the punishment of the innocent for the guilty, nor in general through the intercession of any finite being between God and man. Mediatorial religion in any form was essentially delusive and immoral. But the new analysis of theological belief suggested a reinterpretation of the sense of sin which freed it from all superstitious implications. We are only responsible for our wills; the reluctant affections which we call sinful are a necessary part of our finite nature, a consequence of the limitations which compel us to believe in an infinite goodness.

After this last triumph of sanity over superstition comes a chapter on the 'Sense of Personal Relation to God,' filled with

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 30. [2] *Ibid.*

the sort of mystical pietism which such a title would suggest. The writer's usual lucidity and charm of style do not forsake him; and the experiences related as habitual with devout religious believers are evidently genuine in his case, however strange and incommunicable they may have appeared to many readers who had followed him so far with sympathy. Yet one cannot but suspect that these materials for the soul's history had been collected at a time when Newman held the Evangelical faith in its entirety, and depended more than he was willing to admit on the suggestions of history and ritual, or on the diversion to an unseen object of emotional energies baulked of their legitimate outlet in earthly affections.

It does not appear that Francis Newman had ever read Schleiermacher, or had been in any way affected by his teaching. But a striking analogy suggests itself between their respective positions toward the religious and philosophical tendencies of their respective ages and countries. Each combined high classical scholarship and an acutely critical reason with a genuinely religious enthusiasm not often found in such society. And each drew his mystical inspiration from the same original source, that is the Moravian Brotherhood; Schleiermacher at first-hand by family and school training, Newman indirectly through the Evangelicals and Wesleyans. The English equally with the German theologian claimed to have set religion on an indestructible basis, the testimony of consciousness to its eternal validity, the sense of willing dependence on an infinite object. And judging by the number of editions sold, Newman's Essay seems at first to have won a success not inferior to that of the far more famous 'Reden über die Religion.' But their subsequent fortunes have been widely different. The 'Reden,' after founding modern German theology, has remained a great devotional classic. The 'Soul' is obsolete and forgotten.[1] National idiosyncrasies are no doubt partly responsible for these contrasted results. Always an exotic in our country, Moravian pietism could not long survive the destruction of its original dogmatic

[1] I must mention, however, that Arthur Stanley, writing to Miss F. P. Cobbe under date of Jan. 15, 1875, asks, 'When the sum of theological teaching of the two brothers is weighed, will not "the *Soul*" of Francis be found to counterbalance, as a contribution to true, solid, catholic (even in any sense of the word) Christianity, all the writings of John Henry?' ('Life of Frances Power Cobbe,' Vol. II., p. 157).

supports among a people whose minds are so constituted that they will accept a compromise between two contradictory views of life, while repudiating as absurd a combination in which each is interpenetrated by the other. But apart from its superior adaptation to the German genius, Schleiermacher's religious pantheism seems intrinsically more stable than Newman's ethical theism. A personal relation to the universe does not indeed seem at first sight a very promising foundation for piety as compared with a personal relation to a personal God. But Newman's God, who only acts through general laws, at least so far as the material world is concerned, seems hardly better fitted for the purposes of love than the world itself conceived as one. It is vain to attempt a distinction between the spiritual and material spheres, when the two are blended in our individual lives. Carlyle's bitter complaint that 'He does nothing' will be echoed from a thousand hearts. And in point of fact, Newman's piety, as I have already observed, grew up in an atmosphere where miraculous intervention, under the name of special providence, was believed to be a daily experience.

Schleiermacher, in conscious and avowed opposition to eighteenth-century enlightenment, separated religion from morality as something within whose relatively petty interests it could not worthily be restricted. And the author of the 'Soul' would no doubt have taken this fact as a confirmation of his contention that pantheism is essentially immoral. Yet his own ethical theism impresses one as tending to denaturalise morality by turning it from a social value into a sort of common ground where the soul and her divine lover can meet for purposes of affectionate intercourse. And religion also, which was originally a social rather than an individual interest, a character which it preserves in pantheism, becomes transformed into a preponderatingly personal concern. Such an interpretation agreed well with the self-isolating character of the younger Newman, a character ill-fitted for the founder of a positive school, but enabled by the strength of positive convictions to win a hearing for negative criticism put forward not for its own sake but as a preliminary to the reconstruction of religious belief.

As a rationalist, Newman is much less advanced than Schleiermacher, of whom we may say that he accepted in its entirety the destructive criticism of reason on religious belief,

interpreting religion as not a belief at all, but a feeling, and, as such, inaccessible to rationalistic negation. But they are agreed on one very important point—the denial of human immortality. Newman changed his mind more than once on this subject after his complete rejection of Christianity. In the 'Soul' his attitude is one of uncertainty; in 'Theism' (1858) it is an article of faith; while, finally, in a tract 'On This and the Other World' (1878), and 'Palinodia' (1887), it is more or less dogmatically denied. Unusual as such scepticism may seem, it was, after all, merely a return to the thanatism of the great Hebrew prophets, *minus* their idea of God as a dispenser of temporal rewards and punishments, which Newman found incompatible with the reign of law and unnecessary to true morality.

It has long been the tradition of English orthodox apologetics to retort on the critics of theology by 'driving them over a precipice,' that is, by attempting to show that their arguments, if good for anything, are equally good as against whatever positive convictions they continue to hold. If they are theists, it is urged that they ought in consistency to give up their belief in a personal, or at least in a beneficent, God. If they are pantheists, they must give up metaphysics. If they are agnostics, they must give up morality. If they were to profess moral scepticism, they would probably be invited to give up living. Rationalists reply that the argument proves too much, being equally good for Romanism as against Protestantism, and for any of the great Asiatic religions as against both. It is also open to the charge of insincerity, or at least of unreality, when used by those who believe more against those who believe less, being always directed against those tenets which they hold in common. Thus a Catholic who accepts the twofold authority of the Church and the Bible cannot dispute the claims of Scripture against a Protestant without weakening to the same extent the Scriptural foundation on which the Church's claims repose. He may induce his opponent to imitate him in performing an intellectual hara-kiri, but that will leave the issue between them precisely where they found it. And similarly, as revelation presupposes natural theism, its defenders cannot gain by upsetting the logically prior creed. This, however, was what Newman's assailants, especially the chief among them, Henry Rogers, actually did. They replied to 'Phases of Faith'

almost solely by denying his right to the theism set forth in the 'Soul,' and they did this on the strength of arguments having no special applicability to his position as distinguished from their own. Naturally the effect of their writings, if any, was to hasten the dissolution of pietism by pulling to pieces its last retreat.

Francis Newman's negative criticism is all good so far as it goes, and has been strengthened at every point by subsequent enquiry. It may serve to show how mistaken is the assumption that if the leading points now in dispute between rationalists and orthodox theologians were decided in a conservative sense the old faith would be restored. Evolution as a scientific doctrine, although already put forward in the 'Vestiges,' has no place among his objections to the historical value of the Mosaic cosmogony. Geology as it stood sufficed amply for the purpose by its disproof of the Flood. Whether the Hebrew patriarchs or Moses and Aaron did or did not exist were questions which might have interested him as a historian, but hardly as a theologian. De Wette taught him enough to annihilate the Christological value of the prophecies. No possible solution of what is called the Synoptic problem will acquit the first three Evangelists of what he charges them with—mutual inconsistency, superstition, and falsehood. His destructive criticism of the Fourth Gospel proceeds throughout on the hypothesis of its apostolic origin, and would remain of equal force were its authenticity confirmed. Questions about the date and authorship of Acts and the Pauline Epistles do not concern him. Whether all or some or none of the latter were written by the great missionary of Tarsus, they remain equally valuable as records of spiritual experience, equally innocent of Catholic dogma, equally irrelevant as attestations of supernatural occurrences.

Much as he disliked the cold abstract deism of the eighteenth century, Francis Newman is in some respects more in sympathy with its attitude towards Christianity than with that of more modern rationalism. He is quite ready to charge the Biblical writers with deceit; and in discussing the character of Jesus he reminds us rather of Reimarus than of Renan. Again, according to him, the New Testament is *inadequate* as a standard of morals. The Gospel tends to encourage beggary at

the expense of industry. Both Jesus and Paul preach submission to the established authorities, however unjust and oppressive their action may be. We are told, indeed, to obey God rather than man; but the Christian interpretation of this precept has always limited the duty of resistance to ecclesiastical matters. National and domestic rights are not recognised, slavery is sanctioned, an essential inferiority is allotted to the female sex, and the moral value of sexual love ignored. In this last respect Euripides is a nobler teacher than Jesus, Paul, or John.[1] Finally, intellectual and aesthetic culture is altogether neglected. We have already seen how large a share in modern civilisation this writer ascribes to the Renaissance; and nothing can show better than his example how much the increasing attention paid to classical scholarship must have had to do with the dissolution of pietism in England.

As there were two Newmans, so also there were two Froudes, representing respectively the retrograde and the advanced tendencies of religious thought in the period following the Reform era. Hurrell Froude died young, and left no individual impress on the tendencies of his generation. What he did was slightly to accelerate a movement which without him would probably have run the same course to the same conclusion. But if the reports of his friends and admirers deserve credence, it seems likely that he surpassed his younger brother, the celebrated historian, as much as John Henry surpassed Francis Newman. Anthony Froude ranks, indeed, among the foremost prose-writers of a brilliant literary period, and his industry was sufficient to feed that wonderful style with ever fresh materials through a literary career extending over nearly half a century. But as a thinker he had neither depth nor originality. Possessing a gift of ingenious combination, which supplied him with abundant and plausible views on every subject of human interest, he had no power of logical systematisation; a quick and summary observer, he neither saw things truly as they are, nor troubled himself to reason out their reality, not believing that such a reality, even if it existed, could be ascertained. He passed for disliking women; and if there be truth in the report, his antipathy may have arisen from a

[1] 'Miscellanies,' Vol. II., p. 167.

subconscious sense of, and revolt against certain feminine weaknesses in himself—indecision, vacillation, shiftiness, and a blind admiration for the sheer force which is wrongly conceived to be the corrective of those defects. Newman, the most commanding personality at Oxford, Carlyle and Tennyson, the greatest literary forces of contemporary England, Henry VIII., the incarnation of overbearing self-will, Julius Caesar, the greatest name in history, were the most prominent objects of his idolatry; while, as the supreme exponent of their masterful qualities, he recognised above all wills and worlds the existence of an omnipotent Judge, conceived on the old Semitic rather than on the Christian model.

Reared in the simple, genial, picturesque religion of a Devonshire home, Biblical but not pietistic, Froude during his early Oxford days fell under Newman's magnetic influence, but not, as would seem, to the extent of formally enrolling himself among the Tractarians. When he first became interested in the Movement, it was no longer what it had been in his brother's time. After starting as a protest against Liberal statesmanship and Evangelical insufficiency, it had developed into a scheme for the complete Romanisation of the Anglican Church, by way of fortifying religious belief against the rising flood of rationalism. Anti-Christian reasonings were not to be met by reasoning but by something higher—by an appeal to authority or to mysticism. Newman declared from the pulpit that 'Hume's argument against miracles was logically sound,'[1] referring his hearers to faith as the true evidence of Christianity; faith, that is, in the Church's teachings. This puzzled Froude a good deal; for, after all, the acceptance of Church authority rested on outward sense and reason. Besides, such a method seemed to lead straight to Rome, and he had been brought up to believe that the Pope was the Man of Sin, and to associate opposition to papal pretensions with English patriotism.

A residence of some months in the family of an Evangelical clergyman in Ireland, soon after taking his degree (1842), revived the young man's early prejudices. He observed that 'the Protestants were industrious and thriving,' while 'mendicancy, squalor, and misery went along with the flocks of the priest.'[2] His host and the circle to which he belonged, although

[1] Froude's 'Short Studies,' Vol. IV., p. 182. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

holding opinions almost indistinguishable from Calvinistic Methodism, were high-bred, sensible, cultivated gentlemen, leading exemplary lives. The Reformation could not have been such a mistake as his Oxford friends made out when these were the fruits it bore. Newman, it is true, claimed the right to hold the specific doctrines of Rome without submitting to the Roman See; so that Irish squalor was a doubtful argument as against his peculiar position. But his pretensions seemed hardly honest, and Froude's faith in him was shaken by the peculiar logic of Tract XC.

Carlyle's influence told in the same direction. Froude read his 'French Revolution,' and found that a man of genius and sincerity not inferior to Newman's might arrive at precisely opposite conclusions. When authority was divided against itself, private judgment seemed not only a right but a duty. Then came an incident which finally destroyed his faith in the Tractarian leader. A sermon preached by Newman at St. Mary's on February 21, 1843, contained the celebrated sentence: 'Scripture says the earth is stationary and the sun moves; science that the sun is stationary and the earth moves, and we never shall know which is true till we know what motion is.'[1] Froude argued that if this be so, every word in Scripture may have some secret meaning unknown to us, 'seeming all the while to have a plain and easy meaning constructed purposely to lead us astray.'[2]

In his perplexity the young enquirer turned to German literature, reading Goethe, Lessing, Neander, and Schleiermacher. The 'Vestiges' introduced modern science under a new aspect, and opened new avenues of thought. His progress seems to have been rapid. Writing in November, 1844, Jowett observes that 'Froude has become regularly Germanised, and talked

[1] 'Nemesis of Faith,' p. 157. Newman's exact words are: 'Scripture says that the sun moves and the earth is stationary; and science that the earth moves and the sun is comparatively at rest. How can we determine which of these opposite statements is the very truth until we know what motion is? If our idea of motion be but an accidental result of our present senses, neither proposition is true and both are true, neither true philosophically, both true for certain practical purposes in the system in which they are respectively found' ('University Sermons,' p. 348). So stated, the whole distinction seems to resolve itself into a very harmless platitude.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 158.

unreservedly about Strauss, miracles, etc.'[1] With a mind in this state he took deacon's orders—possibly to avoid losing his fellowship. The casuistry of Newman and Ward had accustomed the Oxford conscience to take ecclesiastical pledges with a large latitude of interpretation; and Strauss had shown that on Hegelian principles the Christian dogmas remained untouched by the destruction of the Christian legend.

Meanwhile another train of thought had been started, equally tending towards general scepticism, accompanied by hollow professions of religious belief. In 1843 Newman projected a series of Lives of the English Saints, and invited several of his friends to help him in the undertaking. One of these was Froude. The offer took him somewhat by surprise, for less than two months before Newman had shown himself well aware of what was passing in the young man's mind. 'It was impossible,' says the future historian, writing in a thinly veiled autobiographical narrative, 'it was impossible I could really feel towards them as he did, or believe the stories I was to have the relation of. . . . Perhaps he fancied it was an employment which would do me good.'[2] Anyhow, he accepted, but withdrew from the work after contributing a single biography, the life of St. Neots.

To the Tractarians it cannot have seemed a very edifying performance. Froude begins with the candid admission that not 'every fact in the legend' he is going to relate 'can be supported on sound historical evidence.'[3] One might ask whether there is so much as one single fact; but from his point of view, that does not seem of any consequence. According to him, we none of us tell the truth, even in reporting what has fallen within our personal experience. 'Who has not observed within himself, in his ordinary dealings with the facts of everyday life, with the sayings and doings of his acquaintances, in short, with everything which comes before him as a *fact*, a disposition to forget the real order in which they appear, and rearrange them according to his theory of how they ought to be? Do we hear of a generous self-denying action, in a short time the real doer and it are forgotten; it

[1] 'Life of Benjamin Jowett,' Vol. I., p. 111.
[2] 'Shadows of the Clouds,' p. 184.
[3] Newman's 'Lives of the English Saints,' Vol. III., p. 80.

has become the property of the noblest person we know; so a jest we relate of the wittiest person, frivolity of the most frivolous, and so on; each particular act we attribute to the person we conceive most likely to have been the author of it. And this does not arise from any wish to leave a false impression, scarcely from carelessness, but only because facts refuse to remain bare and isolated in our memory; they will arrange themselves under some law or other; they must illustrate something to us—some character, some principle—or else we forget them. . . . So uncertain traditions of miracles . . . are handed down from generation to generation; and each set of people, as they pass into their minds, naturally group them round the great central figure of their admiration or veneration, be he hero or be he saint.'[1]

It may be that all of us—or, at least, all of us who are clever enough—have by nature this disposition to 'rearrange facts as they ought to be.' But in most of us it is, let us hope, kept under severe control by the fear of being described as habitual liars, by the fear of becoming embroiled with our friends, by the fear of having to pay heavy damages for libel, or perhaps, in a few exceptional cases, by some regard for truth as such. However, what concerns us more nearly on the present occasion is to notice that, so far as miraculous narratives go, Froude seems to have in mind Strauss's mythic theory, according to which the miracles related of Jesus are simply reminiscences of Old Testament miracles adapted to the requirements of a Messianic narrative. And taken in conjunction with the conversation reported by Jowett, his printed words may not unfairly be interpreted as a general admission of agreement with Strauss.

Writing long afterwards, Froude speaks as if he had been a good deal scandalised and alienated by the 'stuff' with which the Lives of the Saints are filled, and by the undiscriminating credulity of their compilers. One might suppose, from his expressions of disgust, that this experience was what brought about his final severance from Newman's party. But the contemporary evidence, so far as it goes, hardly bears out this view. For as he looked at things then, or not long afterwards, the difference between one religion and another was not

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 82–3.

determined by the varying strain they put on his credulity, all being, in fact, equally false and equally true—as Newman said of the various motions ascribed to the sun and earth by Scripture and science. Of the character who stands for himself in his autobiographical novel it is said, 'A profound belief in God and in God's providence, lay at the very core of his soul; but all beyond it seemed but shifting cloud, at a distance forming into temples and mountains and skyey palaces, but seen close and examined, all fog and choking vapour. He appeared to believe and disbelieve alike every religion which had ever worked among any number of mankind from the beginning. Religions were all myths. In the region of the supernatural you were far away from fact, and the religious histories were the symbolic growth of an idea, marking a step in the progress of mankind.'[1]

'Such a faith' was, as Froude observes, 'not popular' at that time. It seemed to him incompatible with either form of Catholicism, the Anglican or the Roman; and certainly to entertain it would have been thought an odd reason for following Newman into the Roman Church. Yet before the close of his life he might have heard this very creed—or something still more indefinite—professed by a number of intelligent and honest gentlemen, calling themselves Liberal Catholics, and perhaps even Newmanites. If so, one can imagine him observing that their liberality was greater than their knowledge of history.

There is no record of the date when Froude first read Spinoza, but it cannot have been later than 1847. The study of the 'Ethica' did not make him a pantheist, but it made him a determinist.[2] Spinozism impressed him chiefly as 'declaring the impossibility of the existence of a power antagonistic to God; and defining the perfection of man's nature, as the condition under which it has the fullest action and freest enjoyment of all its powers;' which it sets 'as a moral ideal before us, toward which we shall train our moral efforts as the artist trains his artistic efforts towards his ideal.'[3] Such an interpretation of religion destroys the sense of sin. 'The spectre which haunted

[1] 'Shadows of the Clouds,' pp. 180–181.

[2] At the end of an article on Spinoza, contributed to the 'Westminster Review' in 1854, Froude argues—whether sincerely or not I cannot say—against determinism. But in a private letter, dated September 23, 1889, he says, 'I believe Free Will to be an illusion' ('The Table-Talk of Shirley,' p. 204).

[3] 'Nemesis of Faith,' p. 96.

the conscience is gone. Our failures are errors, not crimes—nature's discipline with which God teaches us; and as little violations of His law, or rendering us guilty in His eyes as the artist's early blunders, or even ultimate and entire failures, are laying store of guilt on him.'[1] Thus Wilberforce's 'Practical View of Christianity' was answered; and pietism, after forcing its way up from the lowest to the highest stratum of English culture, had worked out the negation of itself.

Froude, as I have said, seems to have taken orders with no more extended creed than the very summary confession attributed to his almost synonymous hero, Edward Fowler, in the autobiographical romance. But it must have dawned on him at last that the position of a clerical fellow of Exeter was not exactly compatible with his opinions; and they would be still more out of place in the incumbent of a college living. At any rate, his second novel, 'The Nemesis of Faith' (1849), seems to have been published with the design of bringing matters to a crisis. The 'Shadows of the Clouds' had appeared anonymously; the new work bore his name on its title-page. It is not, like the other, autobiographical, but an unmistakable vein of self-confession runs through the theological portions; and I have felt justified in using them freely as evidence of the author's own opinions.

The story runs as follows. Markham Sutherland, a young man of brilliant promise and destined for a clerical career, but troubled by serious doubts about the truth of Christianity, is persuaded against his better judgment to take orders, as the necessary condition for obtaining a comfortable family living. But the occupations which were to have served as an anodyne to his intellectual torments fail of their intended effect. Neither parish work among discontented Chartist operatives, nor tea-parties where spiteful gossip supplies the staple of conversation, can convince him that the popular religion is true. Moreover, by standing aloof from Evangelicals and Puseyites alike, he incurs the hostility of both; while the undogmatic tone of his sermons excites not unreasonable suspicions of his orthodoxy. Finally a trap is laid, into which the impetuous Markham readily walks. A private dinner-party is arranged, where he is invited to take the chair at an approaching meeting of the Bible

[1] 'Nemesis of Faith,' p. 96.

Society. He not only refuses, but allows himself to be goaded into an angry tirade against the folly of carrying Bibles all over the world and thrusting them into the hands of people to whom they are likely to do more harm than good. This is just what Markham's enemies wanted; his words are reported to the Bishop, who sends for him, and questions him about his religious opinions, of which the young clergyman now makes no secret, confessing that he cannot accept the doctrine of the Atonement (as then understood), that he took orders with very serious doubts about Christianity, and that they have not been dispelled by his experience of the Church. The good Bishop is more grieved than surprised; he knows how unbelief is spreading in England; in all his many years on the earth he has 'not found one man of more than common power who has been content to abide in the old ways.'[1]

Markham resigns his living, goes to the Lake of Como, meets and falls in love with a fascinating young married lady, with whom he is thrown into daily association through her husband's neglect. His passion is reciprocated, but not indulged. At last, while they are philandering together in a boat, the lady's little daughter, whom they are not attending to, gets wet through, and dies the same night. Overcome by the agonies of remorse, Markham is about to commit suicide, but finds himself suddenly recalled to life and faith by the voice of an old friend, evidently meant for Father Newman, who happens to be passing through that district on his way to Rome. Reeling under the newly awakened sense of sin, and subjected to the old personal spell, he too becomes a convert to Catholicism. But the impression does not last. Before long his doubts return, and he is left at the end of the story a miserable wreck, whose principal use in life has been to show what mischief comes of burdening religion with a mass of incredible superstitions. Markham would have retained his earlier belief had Newman let well alone, and not provoked a reaction by his exaggerated defiance of reason.

For that is the moral of the book. Right conduct, according to Froude,—and in this belief at least he remained steadfast through life—right conduct depends on religion. But to constitute religion no more is required than faith in a living God,

[1] 'Nemesis of Faith,' pp. 75–6.

which may or may not be associated with myths accepted as true, but which cannot safely be associated with myths proved to be such by advancing knowledge. For then the vital core of religion runs the risk of being flung away together with its accidental integuments, and the poison of immoral doctrines will be assimilated in its stead. Twice at least has Europe already passed through a crisis of this kind, once under the Roman empire, and then again just before the Reformation. On both occasions a mythology innocently accepted in more primitive ages had fallen to pieces in the light of modern science, and belief in any sort of moral government of the world had perished with it. And on both occasions also a new and purer faith, first Christianity and then Protestantism, had risen on the ruins of the old superstition. A third crisis is now at hand. Ominous symptoms are showing themselves in England of a divorce between religion and life to their common misfortune. Religion is becoming unreal, life materialised and degraded. The Tractarians saw the evil, but were wholly mistaken as to the proper remedy. To go back on the Reformation, to resuscitate mediaeval doctrines and practices, was to make religion not more but less credible, and to drive men into atheism by representing it as the only logical alternative to a theology which is certainly untrue. A better and wiser course had been pursued in Germany, where thought had moved on instead of back, gradually stripping off fable from fact, and helping men to a better understanding and appreciation of the Bible than the labour of two centuries of orthodox commentators had enabled England to acquire.

The liberty enjoyed by German theologians had not as yet been granted to English clergymen, and many battles were to be fought before they could obtain it. Froude himself was the first martyr in their cause. The 'Nemesis' raised a storm. At a college lecture Dr. Sewell, the Warden of Exeter, asked his hearers whether any of them had read it. One of the undergraduates handed him the heretical volume. Sewell threw it into the fire, 'at the same time stirring the coals to make them burn.' He then asked, 'What have I done?' According to one version, the unlucky owner of the book replied, 'you have burned my copy and I shall have to buy a new one.' According

to another, he retorted with greater wit by saying, 'you have stirred the fire, Sir.'[1]

On that very day Froude resigned his fellowship. He had accepted the headmastership of a college in Tasmania, but his persecutors contrived to get the appointment cancelled. His father, the Archdeacon of Totness, stopped his allowance. Many of his friends cut him in the street. At this juncture a gift of £200 from an anonymous benefactor came opportunely to save him from ruin,[2] and eventually he succeeded in earning a living by his pen.

Froude's great English history must be regarded primarily as a contribution to the controversy then raging between reason and ecclesiastical reaction. As matters stood, it seemed necessary before all things to save the Reformation. Protestantism had preserved many untenable beliefs; and the Church of England in particular represented a hollow compromise with Catholicism, fatally avenged by the Tractarian and Romanising movement of the nineteenth century. But the Tudor reformers succeeded in destroying much that was noxious, and their heroic labours secured for England her high place among the nations. This had earned them the obloquy of the modern High Church party. Accordingly, for the credit of true religion, their character must be vindicated; and Froude set himself to the task with more zeal and eloquence than knowledge or discretion. Less fortunate than Carlyle and Macaulay, he has done more harm than good to his clients. Henry VIII. and the band of sycophants who surrounded him look, if possible, even blacker than before in the light of contemporary documents. It also showed a strange ignorance of general history to suppose that a cause, otherwise good, can be discredited by the political agents to whom its victory was due. In a rude age they will, as often as not, be lying, treacherous, and sanguinary ruffians; in a civilised age they will, more often than not, be unscrupulous intriguers; while in all ages the disinterested enthusiasts will profit by their help with a finely uncritical toleration of God's appointed instruments. There is always the consolation of remembering that quite as bad things are done on the other side—and done for a bad cause into the bargain.

In the world-wide issues of history there can be no permanent party-divisions except on the lines of reason and

[1] Max Müller's 'Auld Lang Syne,' p. 77. [2] *Ibid.*

science against routine and superstition. Experience shows that the general progress of enlightenment leads to increased personal liberty and increased participation of the people in the work of government, and that it is in turn favoured by the diffusion of those privileges. But the association is not invariable. There have been retrograde and narrow-minded democracies; nor does freedom from prejudice always go with freedom from control. Fifty years ago a peculiar combination of circumstances had led to the identification of political liberalism with the removal of disabilities rather than with the love of reasoned truth or the organisation of beneficent action. Froude and his master Carlyle were great admirers of the French Revolution; but they were no great partisans of democracy in the abstract, holding that votes should not be given to people who are unfit to use them, and that an enlightened despot does more for the good of his subjects than a stupid or fanatical representative assembly. Personally, also, they admired force of character for its own sake, and easily persuaded themselves that it went along with high ideal aims. The result was that the public opinion of their own time summarily classed them as admirers and apologists of tyranny as such; Froude in particular figuring both in the press and in drawing-room conversation as the historian who approved of Henry VIII.'s conduct in cutting off the heads of his innocent wives without a trial. Probably many thought that he accepted the Reformation for the sake of Bluebeard rather than—what was really his motive—Bluebeard for the sake of the Reformation.

With such an obstacle to the right understanding of its drift and purpose, it is hard to tell how Froude's history acted on religious thought in England. No one, so far as I know, has left on record that it influenced his opinions one way or the other. But on the whole its effect, if any, seems likely to have told on the liberal side. Froude himself had still a conspicuous part to play in the conflict with reaction; but that belongs to a later period of the century.

Returning to the close of the fifth decade, we have to mention a personality of genius, much inferior indeed to Froude's, but still in a high degree interesting and significant. A few months before the author of the 'Nemesis of Faith' was driven

from Exeter College, his friend and contemporary, Arthur Hugh Clough, had resigned his fellowship at Oriel for the same reason—that he had ceased to believe in the established religion. Clough had been a favourite pupil of Arnold's, and offered a characteristic example of the high-pressure system pursued at Rugby. He partially broke down under the strain, and even in early manhood showed signs of premature old age.[1] During his first years at Oxford the Tractarian fever was at its height, and Newman's personal magnetism may have infected the enthusiastic youth with it to some extent. A more intellectual influence was that exercised by his college tutor, W. G. Ward. They became fast friends, and 'the current comment in Oxford when they were seen walking constantly together was: "There goes Ward mystifying poor Clough, and persuading him that he must either believe *nothing*, or accept the whole of Church doctrine."'[2] Clough ultimately settled down to something very like the former alternative; but we need not assume that he accepted it *as* an alternative; or, in other words, that he was driven into complete unbelief by the repulsion from sacerdotal authority to be expected in a pupil of Arnold's. With German literature and philosophy, interpreted by Carlyle and Emerson, filling all the air, Ward's dialectic must have been a rather superfluous stimulant. Moreover, in 1843, we find him reading a 'grand new philosophy-book, "Mill on Logic," very well written at any rate and "stringent if not sound,"'[3] which would be pretty sure to work in the same direction. A year later, 'without in the least denying Christianity,' he 'feels little that he can call its power.'[4] Then, after reading the 'Life of Blanco White,' he finds himself attracted towards the Unitarians, wishes to meet Francis Newman, and does meet James Martineau, who impresses him very favourably.[5] Whether the events narrated in the Gospel really happened or not is, he thinks, a question of little importance. Philosophical problems of Grace, Freewill, and Redemption are what he must work at. Neither the Evangelicals nor Newman can pretend to reconcile the Atonement

[1] So I have been told by one who knew him at the time.
[2] 'W. G. Ward and the Oxford Movement,' p. 107.
[3] 'The Poems and Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough,' Vol. I., p. 91.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 95. [5] P. 106.

with perfect justice.[1] When children are caught stealing you should not frighten them by talking about the dreadful sinfulness of theft, but show them that people cannot live together without respecting the rights of property.[2] 'It is far nobler to teach people to do what is good because it is good simply, than for the sake of any future reward. Besides if *we* die and come to nothing it does not therefore follow that life and goodness will cease to be in earth and heaven.'[3]

Before these last lines were written Clough had resigned his fellowship. He felt the sacrifice as a relief. 'When at last he broke away from the University and the Church,' Arthur Stanley tells us, 'it was with the delight of one who had known more than other men the weight of the yoke which ecclesiastical authority had once laid upon him.'[4] Yet if the young enthusiast felt a very intelligible relief, amounting even to joy, in his escape from false professions and compulsory observances, made more sickening by 'some life of men unblest,' we need not think that his severance from Arnold's creed was accomplished without spasms of bitter pain. Indeed short of assuming that his famous poem 'Easter Day,' written at Naples a year after his departure from Oxford, was the expression of a purely imaginative and dramatic mood—a presentation not of what he suffered himself but of what others might suffer in losing their belief—there is no choice but to admit that the Christian promises had been very dear to him, and had only been sacrificed to the love of truth for its own sake.

'Easter Day' is a reversed hymn, a funereal dirge of supernatural religion. After summing up the so-called evidences of Christ's resurrection, and dismissing them one by one in verses where the convincingness of metre and rhyme comes to reinforce the irreversible verdict of historical criticism, the poet cries out in his anguish—

> 'Eat, drink, and die, for we are souls bereaved:
> Of all the creatures under heaven's wide cope
> We are most hopeless who had once most hope,
> And most beliefless that had most believed.
> * * * * *
> This is the one sad Gospel that is true,
> Christ is not risen!'

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[1] P. 111. [2] P. 112. [3] P. 135.

[4] Quoted by Samuel Waddington in his monograph on Clough, p. 125.

Let the women who stood weeping by the tomb return to their husbands and children who still live, and cherish *them*, or if they must pray, pray for death, since he whom they so loved, whom they deemed more than man, lies mouldering away, never to rise again. Let the Apostles go back to their nets and catch not men but fish. Above all, let the good men of after ages, who believe because they have *not* seen, no longer mistake their wishes for proofs, no longer hope for an impossible immortality, but take this actual world, such as it is, and make the most of it, the clergy confessing their ignorance of all that lies beyond, and all of us thinking of what we have lost, but saying no more about it.

Then comes a sequel, less sublime but more consolatory, repeating what Strauss had said before, anticipating what Renan was to say again, that in the loftier, more ideal sense, Christ is really risen, risen in the creed of an unconquerable hope and the gospel of an imperishable joy.

In another poem, left uncompleted, Clough has treated the same subject, no longer in strains of lyrical exaltation, but with such remorseless strength of satire that the invisible and anonymous censorship under which we live has rarely, if ever, since its first publication permitted this admirable piece of literature to be quoted or even referred to. It is called 'The Shadow.' In a dream the poet sees a shadow sitting on a grave. It has come with a message to mankind. And this is what it says—

> 'I am the Resurrection of the Dead.
> The night is past, the morning is at hand,
> And I must in my proper semblance stand,
> Appear brief space and vanish—listen, this is true,
> I am that Jesus whom they slew.'

Then the Apostles come first, also as dim shadows, and Peter asks his Lord, is, then, what he and the others preached all untrue? To which the Shade replies that he knows not what they have preached, but that he is Jesus is true. Next the great World, chancing to pass that way, stops and speaks to the police, observing that such a scandalous exhibition ought not to be tolerated. Not that he personally has any opinion one way or the other about what took place so long ago; but he has always understood that the Atonement and

the Resurrection were rather comfortable things to believe in when one was dying; and, anyhow, his wife and children must have a place to pray in once a week. A subtle Jesuit cardinal observes that, true or not, religion must be kept up for the sake of the people; adding—

> 'most demurely,
> Whatever may befall,
> We Catholics need no evidence at all,
> The holy father is infallible surely!'

English canons urge that, whatever ground we take, difficulties are certain to occur. Theism and pantheism are open to at least as grave objections as Christianity. As for the Shade, visions prove nothing nowadays, whatever their value may have been formerly. Other dignitaries of the Church argue that what is worth so much money to them must not be given up. Butler and Paley have proved it, and it must be true. To this the Shade replies that he has no learning, and may be wrong, but believes that he is Christ. When good women ask him, what, then, are they to teach their children and the poor? he says he cannot tell, but the fact is so. Last of all, a visitor who has kept all the commandments from his youth, but who still lacks one thing—truth, is dismissed with the advice to enjoy his great possessions while he may.

Clough continued to the last a sceptic in the true sense, that is, he could come to no fixed belief, positive or negative, about the ultimate facts of existence. Historical Christianity was certainly mythical; nor, putting things in the most favourable light, could history ever supply a satisfactory basis for religion. But the simple theism of Francis Newman and J. A. Froude was equally invalid. The one appealed to the constitution of the outer world, and both to the moral law within; neither with satisfactory results. Physical science says there is no God; and the inner voice which science cannot gainsay delivers no certain oracle. The idea of God does not involve his existence. Perhaps the idea itself is God, who only exists as such. We add nothing to the idea by providing it with an external counterpart. A First Cause, Artificer and Governor of the Universe, would not, as such, be particularly deserving of

worship. Suppose we are travelling in a steamship. 'The vessel goes its way: how? You conclude there is some one somewhere working these wheels, these pistons, these strong and exquisitely adapted means. . . . And if in a dark room under the main deck you have hunted out a smudgy personage with a sub-intelligent look about the eyes, is that so great a gospel for me? No, not even should you go further and signalise to me James Watt! Am I therefore to fall down and worship? . . . I will worship rather the broad sea, the wavy hills, and the empty sky round about and above me, or the chance volume . . . in my hand.' [1]

Conscience and duty had, of course, nothing to do with the smudgy personage under any form, and were to be obeyed for their own sake, irrespective of consequences to ourselves. On this point the younger Newman would have agreed with Clough, whatever difficulties Froude, with his surviving theological prejudices, might have raised. But Newman's notion of a personal relation to God, the grand distinction between his theism and the natural religion of the previous century, seemed no more tenable than the notion of moral dependence. Clough hated what we call pietism; and he saw, he alone, that the whole religious movement, Evangelical, Tractarian, Romanist, or simply theistic, had its root in the same morbid craving for religious emotion, and in the effort to pump it up where it did not exist. 'To believe such spiritual communion'—as Francis Newman teaches—'possible is perhaps not unwise, to expect it is perilous; to seek it pernicious. To make it our business here is simply suicidal; to indulge in practices with a view to it most unwholesome and dangerous. The belief that religion is, or in any way requires, devotionality, is, if not the most noxious, at least the most obstinate form of irreligion.' [2]

In practice it leads to a separation between religion and common life. Arnold had always protested against their severance, but without admitting that it was encouraged by the multiplication of devotional observances, to which he was in principle by no means hostile. But as Clough had pushed his old master's historical conscientiousness to its extreme

[1] 'Prose Remains,' p. 302.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 299.

consequences in Biblical criticism, so he carried 'the sacramental sanctity of life,' inculcated at Rugby, to its limit also, by the elimination of all worship but the worship of silence. Not only religious belief but even religious feeling vanishes as a distinct element of life by being absorbed into the enthusiasm for duty and practical philanthropy. The detested Benthamites seem to be right after all; for the grand charge against pietism in both its forms, Catholic and Protestant, is that it manifests itself as blind benevolence and almsgiving. And not content with doing mischief, it directly opposes the good attempted to be done by saner methods. 'Is it certain that this devotional pseudo-religion interferes with reforms and improvements, most obvious, most practicable? The machinery of education, will you say it is in no degree impeded by such prejudices as we have been attacking?'[1]

We shall see hereafter that it was precisely the spread of rationalism which first made any system of national education possible.

Clough's friend and fellow-student, Matthew Arnold, grew up under the same influences, and seems to have arrived much about the same time at the same conclusions. But his healthier, better-balanced mind, aided by happier external circumstances, enabled him, so far as we can judge, to drop the old faith without a struggle, and to live at ease in his new philosophy. That philosophy was a sort of Stoical pantheism, saturated with Wordsworth's passionate love of nature, and exalted by Goethe's humanising culture. I am speaking, of course, about Matthew Arnold's earlier views, not of his views as they were further developed or differently expressed many years afterwards in the presence of a public opinion which imposed another attitude and new duties on the teacher. They are conveyed exclusively in poetry, but poetry marked by greater preciseness and concision than his prose, admirable as it is, ever attained. His most explicit confession of faith, or rather the contrary, is put into the mouth of Empedocles, a thinker whose recorded opinions are so remote from those attributed to him in Arnold's drama that we need not feel the slightest scruple in restoring them to their real and only responsible author. Indeed, the

[1] P. 305.

lyric form of the verses supposed to be pronounced by Empedocles before he plunges into the crater of Etna, seems to stamp them with a peculiarly personal note, as when Sophocles uses the voice of the Chorus to convey his own highest thoughts on man and on man's relation to the world.

The solemn five-lined chaunt, whose meaning and moral I now proceed to extract, carries us back to a time of weariness and reaction, such as that which came after the revolutionary fever of 1848. Calamities afflict the earth (an allusion to the epidemic of cholera); oppression reigns triumphant; the good are discouraged and even persecuted. What then? Let us fly to the refuge of our own souls. Neither the preachers of religion nor the teachers of egoistic morality have any other oracle to offer than what you find within yourself. The most universal fact revealed by introspection is that every one desires his own happiness:—

> 'Nor is that thirst to blame!
> Man errs not that he deems
> His welfare his true aim;
> He errs because he dreams
> The world does but exist that welfare to bestow.'

Our desires are the product of ancestral conditions reaching far back into the past, and in many ways out of keeping with the present world into which we find ourselves suddenly thrown. And the discord is heightened by our own unreasonableness, which invents 'a false course for the world and for ourselves false powers';—ruining health and fortune by dissipation, and then hoping for some lucky accident to set things right.[1]

Let us suppose that this first cause of unhappiness has been removed, and that we have trained ourselves to be perfectly just and pure. Still other sources of misery remain; the forces of nature act without the least regard to our virtues. Fatal accidents are as likely to befall the good as the bad. Nor is that enough; if we escape such mishaps, the evil deeds of others come in to darken our lives.

In such circumstances the obviously wise course would be to make the best of things as we find them, securing for ourselves a tolerable subsistence by hard work. But we have found 'an

[1] There seems to be a reminiscence of Micawber here. 'David Copperfield' appeared in 1850.

easier way to cheat our pains,' filling empty space with Gods, to whose will we impute our misfortunes. There is, in fact, one such divine power, the common substance of all things; but as we are ourselves part of it, no relief can be gained by speaking of it as the author of our ills.

Accordingly the next step is to reverse our original proceeding, feigning Gods of another kind, as good as the first ones were bad. Because our knowledge is limited, there must be Gods who are all-knowing; and as we cannot find happiness on earth, we must be destined to enjoy perfect happiness with them in heaven —a foolish imagination! for it would be more reasonable to infer that what cannot be found here cannot be found at all.

The moral is that we should moderate our desires rather than look to some future world for their fulfilment. And even taking life as it is, there are abundant sources of joy, were we but content to accept them, instead of wasting ourselves on the pursuit of delusions. Thus the conclusion is practically identical with that of Clough's Easter Day:—

> 'Life still
> Leaves human effort scope.
> But, since life teems with ill,
> Nurse no extravagant hope;
> Because thou must not dream, thou needst not then despair.'

The pantheism ascribed by Matthew Arnold to Empedocles is no other than that of Spinoza, his admiration for whom continued through life. His morality, too, seems a reminiscence of Spinoza's ethics, departing from Stoicism just where the Jewish philosopher's teaching, in other ways so Stoical, differed from the system of the Porch. Zeno and his successors were teleologists, to the extent of holding that all things had been arranged with a view to human happiness; whereas modern science had convinced Spinoza that the universe shows no trace of any such philanthropic design, but is a network of mechanical causation on its material side, and on its mental side a development of logical necessities. Hence the increased emphasis laid on resignation in modern as compared with ancient systems of thought, and in Epicurean as compared with Stoic morals. In Matthew Arnold's early poems it returns again and again as the supreme wisdom, differentiating his view of life markedly from that of his more sanguine if more sombre friend Clough, whose

passionate hopes of a regenerated society he gently discourages in a well-known sonnet by a reference to the

> 'high
> Uno'erleaped Mountains of Necessity;'

while Clough taxes him with a too great addiction to mystical theosophy, and a too continuous insistence on the divinity of nature.

To identify Matthew Arnold at any age with any system of philosophy would be an inexcusable error. An eclectic in the best sense, he chose and held fast to whatever ideas had stood the test of ages and of application to his own personal needs, in this respect, as in others, resembling Goethe, the great oracle of that age. Eclecticism might also appeal to the authority of Hegel, for whose disciple Arnold passed at one time, probably without ever having read him. But sometimes, though not always, the intuitions of genius do the work of hard study; and nowhere in literature is so much of Hegelianism summed up so briefly, or so beautifully, as in the early poem entitled 'Morality.' Here we are shown the struggling, agonised spirit of man returning wearily after a long spell of exhausting but not unfruitful taskwork to the bosom of Nature for rest and refreshment—

> 'Nature whose free light cheerful air
> Oft made thee in thy gloom despair.'

But now her face glows with pleasure at the sight of her estranged child, in whose severity of effort she recognises something higher than her unimpeded rush of joyous activity with its intervals of quiet irresponsible repose, something that she has not given,

> 'Yet that severe that earnest air
> I saw, I felt it once, but where?'

And the answer is that her knowledge comes from an experience beyond space and time when she was still one with God. That is to say, in Hegelian phraseology, the Idea alienated from itself in the external world, reintegrates its lost unity in man's conscious fulfilment of the moral law.

How contemporary opinion was affected by such an extremely frank confession of atheism—coming, too, from a son of

Dr. Arnold's—as that embodied in 'Empedocles on Etna,' does not appear. But the volume containing it was withdrawn from circulation when not more than fifty copies had been disposed of, ostensibly for reasons unconnected with theology; and the poem was not reprinted until 1869, when a much greater latitude of expression was tolerated. In theory, at least, its author could appreciate the moral courage implied by disregard of the reigning superstition. This is how he wrote of Harriet Martineau soon after her translation of Comte's 'Positive Philosophy' had appeared:—

'Hail to the steadfast soul
Which unflinching and keen
Wrought to erase from its depth
Mist and illusion and fear!
Hail to the spirit which dared
Trust its own thought, before yet
Echoed her back by the crowd!
Hail to the courage which gave
Voice to its creed, ere the creed
Won consecration from time!'

Public opinion was not then prepared, nor is it even now prepared, to echo back the thoughts either of Harriet Martineau or of her young poetical panegyrist. But when these lines were written the hardest part of the work had already been done. Pietism as a living force in English thought had come to an end before the middle of the nineteenth century. Tried under every form, it had been rejected by the rising intelligence of the nation in all. Opposite sects of religionists might throw the discredit of its failure on each other; but all were equally responsible for the bankruptcy of a faith which strove to make man's fate after death the one absorbing subject of his anxieties on earth, and to treat as sinful the affections given to earthly things rather than to the things above. Every kind of religious education had been tried; and each had failed, in at least one decisive instance, to retain its hold on an elect intelligence animated by a passionate love of truth. The high Anglican could hardly make Arnold's system responsible for the defection of his son and of Arthur Clough, when Anthony Froude was found to have preceded them in the same path, and when, after a longer struggle, his example was silently followed by Mark

Pattison; while the Evangelicals had equally little reason to recommend fidelity to Calvinism as a preservative of Christianity when so devout a soul as Francis Newman let it drop after a trial in which he nearly incurred martyrdom for its sake. Nor did these rationalistic developments give more than a seeming support to the Roman Catholic contention that there is no logical alternative between atheism and the acceptance of ecclesiastical infallibility. None of the freethinkers ever admitted that he was placed in that dilemma; and Froude in particular maintained with passionate dialectic that arguments against the authority of Scripture told still more forcibly against claims based on Gospel-texts. Moreover, the principles of historical criticism which led to the rejection of revealed religion have nothing to do with what are called the evidences of natural religion, and leave them where they were before Christianity came into the world.

It is a conceivable proposition that persons brought up in the Roman Catholic Church are less likely to abandon their religious beliefs than if they had been reared in some form of Protestantism, but it is not one, so far as I know, that has been seriously maintained. Indeed it is generally held to be the reverse of true. There is no country where Catholicism presents itself under such attractive colours as in France; yet at the time of which we are speaking it had lost its hold on the intellect and conscience of the French nation much more completely than had the different forms of Protestantism in England on their old adherents. The two most gifted Frenchmen of their generation, Renan and Taine, both children of Catholic parents and one educated for the priesthood, had ceased to believe in the supernatural more thoroughly and at an earlier age than Froude and Clough; and both in their later years seemed to think that liberal Protestantism offered better security for the preservation of the religious sentiment than the creed of their own youth.

Examples, no doubt, can be offered of converts to Rome who have passed through a rationalistic phase. But these are the advertised cases, sure to draw attention by the *éclat* of a public profession. Less notice is taken of the conversions to Protestantism, numerous enough in the Germanic countries; and the return of a wanderer to the Anglican fold may even

pass unperceived. In any case, these are but surface-eddies; and the great under-currents of religious change set steadily from more to less stringent authority, from more complicated to simpler creeds, from a feebler to a more vigorous exercise of reason. Nor should we be blinded to the general trend of this evolution by the presentation of Protestant ideas under a mask of Catholic conformity, or by the transfer of superstitious folly from the accidental environment of its birth to the more congenial shelter of organised unreason.

English pietism had not greatly endeared itself by early association to the restless young spirits who were now throwing off its yoke. Its professors had little sympathy with children, whose 'perverse and froward characters,' to use Wilberforce's expression, were adduced as a telling evidence of man's fallen state. Sabbatarianism bore on them with especial severity. Even in the comparatively genial household of Ruskin's parents its terrors were painfully experienced. 'It is a strait and sore question with me,' the great critic wrote long afterwards, 'for when I was a child I lost the pleasure of some three-sevenths of my life because of Sunday; for I always had a way of looking forward to things, and a lurid shade was cast over the whole of Friday and Saturday by the horrible sense that Sunday was coming and was inevitable.'[1] With other unfortunates every day seems to have been a Sabbath. The younger Augustus Hare says of Priscilla and Esther Maurice, F. D. Maurice's sisters, 'of the two I personally preferred Priscilla, but both were a fearful scourge to my childhood, and so completely spoiled my life at Hurstmonceaux that I looked forward to the winters spent at Stoke for everything that was not aggressively unpleasant.' 'At a very early age I was made to go to church—once, which very soon grew into twice on Sunday. Uncle Julius's endless sermons were my detestation.' On Wednesdays and Fridays he 'was never allowed to eat butter or to have any pudding.' Inattention to lessons was punished by cruel horse-whippings. Reading a novel or any kind of fiction was thought absolutely wicked. His first schoolmaster, the Rev. Robert Kilvert, 'a very "religious" man, deeply learned in ultra-evangelical theology,' slashed his pupils' hands with a ruler and

[1] 'Fors Clavigera,' Vol. I., p. 485.

their bodies with a cane for exceedingly slight offences. The pupils themselves, bred, we must suppose, in very devout families, were 'a set of little monsters' with the most depraved imaginations. Esther Maurice, afterwards Archdeacon Hare's wife, 'had the inflexible cruelty of a Dominican. She would willingly and proudly undergo martyrdom for her own principles, but she would torture without remorse those who differed from her.'

It may seem strange to those who know religion only by its gentle and humane manifestations in the present day that persons professedly, and no doubt sincerely, religious should indulge in such revolting abuses of power. But in truth what now passes for pure religion is something so transformed by a century of contact with what religionists used to call the godless philosophy of Bentham, as to possess hardly a positive trait in common with the system to which it has succeeded. And those who would rightly estimate the value of rationalism must always take this modifying action into account.

Hare's autobiography is, I believe, unique as a record of what a sensitive child could be made to suffer in a model English family during the religious revival. There may be exaggeration in the details; but the general picture has its fidelity guaranteed by its resemblance to the companion pictures of child-life, all the more real because fictitious, in 'David Copperfield' and 'Jane Eyre.' And there are other sources of information tending to confirm the impression of religious gloom spread over English home-life in the thirties and after. Speaking evidently from personal experience, J. A. Froude tells us that 'home was the place of discipline and authority; all the amusements were at college. At college there were (*sic*) no "you must" and you "must not." At home there was nothing else. Till he went to college (at least since he was quite a child) Edward had never known the idea which is represented by the word amusement. The Canon [read, Archdeacon Froude] had made a point of refusing it to him, and taught him to set an unnatural value on it in order to make him feel the more poignantly what it was to be deprived of it.'[1] In Charles Pearson's family, where also the father was a clergyman, the same system prevailed at a

[1] 'Shadows of the Clouds,' p. 46.

somewhat later period. 'Little provision was made for juvenile amusements and pastimes. . . . His temperament rebelled against the copious religious diet yet was tinctured by it. His child-letters to his mother indicate how strictly the obligation of religious introspection had been inculcated. He had been directed to specify his "most particular faults." After ranking in one epistle "too much troublesomeness and quarrelsomeness" foremost, he gives the palm in another, after due deliberation, to "disobedience" as of "more consequence" still.' The unfortunate subject of this hot-pressure training remarks that 'it was bad for me, morally and intellectually. The most innocent amusements—from dancing to the theatre—were proscribed, and our dissipation was to attend a Bible Society or a Missionary Meeting.'[1] At Rugby, to which he was subsequently sent, entering after Arnold's death, the Arnoldian system did not excite his enthusiasm. The boys were very badly taught, the famous moral culture made them disagreeable prigs, and the best specimens turned out showed no real superiority to the *élite* of Eton, Harrow, and Winchester.

With the great era of industrial expansion dating from the introduction of railways and the complete establishment of free-trade, Evangelicalism gained an evil name from the association of some of its professors with commercial swindling on a large scale. Where the confessional does not exist—except, as we have seen, for the children of pious families—regular codes of casuistry are not found. But there seems to have been a general understanding, practically equivalent to the exculpations of Escobar, that the saints might spoil widows' houses 'in the way of business' without incurring the maledictions of their Master.[2] Corruption completed the process which disunion had begun. Men might once more begin to use their reason without rebuke when the fruits of unreason were apples of the Dead Sea.

[1] 'Charles Henry Pearson,' pp. 2–3 and 12.

[2] See the Preface to Kingsley's 'Yeast' (1851).

CHAPTER XII

THE UNITARIANS AND THE BROAD CHURCH

We have seen how the new Biblical criticism and the revival of eighteenth-century philosophy provoked a great rationalistic movement in England, leading, for the first time in history, to a number of almost simultaneous attacks on the popular religion from writers of high distinction in scholarship and literature. These writers certainly represented a large mass of opinion in the country hostile to the old dogmas and eager for an opportunity of publicly dissenting from them. According to Harriet Martineau, the majority of sensible and thoughtful persons were without theological belief.[1] But if their thoughts, and even their conversation, were free, they remained almost entirely debarred from the wider publicity of the press. Even incidental criticisms, overt or implied, on the Biblical narrative were tabooed. Harriet Martineau herself supplies a striking instance of this irresponsible censorship. Her book on 'Eastern Life,' in which she suggested a natural origin for the Mosaic religion, was accepted by Murray after he had made himself acquainted with the contents; but he subsequently withdrew from this engagement, under the dictation, as was supposed, of his clerical clients.[2] There were even apprehensions, happily unfounded, that Charles Knight would not be able to publish her 'History of the Thirty Years' Peace,' which does not contain a word against Christianity. The author of the 'Vestiges,' besides his carefully guarded anonymity, took pains to reconcile his hypothesis with the literal truth of Genesis; not without cause, for experiments pointing towards the spontaneous generation of insect life had recently drawn down a storm of obloquy on their author, with the result of compelling him to give up

[1] 'Autobiography,' Vol. II., p. 293.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 295.

such pursuits altogether.[1] Works like Hume's 'Essays' or Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall' would certainly not have found any publisher of the first rank had they been offered to the trade in 1850, or indeed for several years afterwards.

In private life also a certain amount of intolerance continued to smoulder. We have seen how Froude was cut by friend after friend in the streets of Oxford; and a few years earlier (1845) a young man, distinguished by the initials E.A.B., felt bound to break off an affectionate intimacy with Herbert Spencer on account of the danger it threatened to his faith.[2] Conservatism was not likely to be conciliated by the violence of the new attacks on tradition. But such violence was necessary before increased freedom of utterance for milder criticisms could be won. All permanent advances in English opinion are secured by compromises; and the further the pioneers of a movement have pressed forward, the larger will be the extent of new territory annexed as the result of a compromise.

England has the good fortune, shared with her by her American colonists, of possessing in Unitarianism a religious community which represents and embodies the spirit of compromise under a form ready for immediate application, whenever —which is pretty often—the controversy between reason and religious belief seems to demand it. We have seen how such an occasion arose in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and again during the pietistic reaction after 1814. From the nature of the case Unitarianism cannot spread to any considerable extent, being subject to continual defections on both sides, back to Catholicism[3] or forward to complete rationalism. But its churches have always engrossed a disproportionate share of ability and virtue, notwithstanding the taunts heaped on their members from both extremes; and their very numerical insignificance makes them the fitter to serve as points of transition.

But the Unitarian spirit is more than a transition point, it

[1] Article on Andrew Crosse in the 'Dictionary of National Biography,' Vol. XIII., p. 224.

[2] Herbert Spencer's 'Autobiography,' pp. 275–6.

[3] In the sense of the Athanasian Creed.

is a leaven. The converts it yields to orthodoxy do not drop at the cathedral door those principles of reason and conscience in whose respect they have been reared. They apply them, perhaps unconsciously, perhaps under subterfuges, to their new faith, with the result that this becomes transformed into something with a meaning quite different from what it originally bore. Examples of the process will present themselves as we proceed. And Unitarians who go further into rationalism carry with them an intelligence of religion and an interest in its records quite unlike the dead indifferentism so frequent among those who reject religion as a whole,—sometimes from motives with which reason has very little to do.

Besides its leavening influence on orthodoxy, Unitarianism contains in itself a germ of progressive criticism. Being related to the Protestant Trinitarian Churches much as they are related to Rome, its adherents are doubly pledged to free enquiry, and traditionally familiar with it through the circumstance of their gradual evolution from Presbyterian Nonconformity. Nor is this all. While orthodox Protestants may fairly take their stand on the letter of Scripture, appealing with confidence to its infallible dictates as against the pretensions of Rome, the Unitarian position is, in this respect, less secure. Various stages of doctrinal development are represented in the New Testament—to say nothing of the Old; and the latest of these are distinctly more in accordance with the orthodox than with the heretical view; while everywhere there are parts which, reflecting as they do the moral ideas of barbarous ages, cannot be accepted as divine truth by the modern English conscience. Thus Unitarian scholars have all along been more disposed than other Christians to welcome the disintegrating criticism which has undermined the historical character of just those Biblical books whose contents were least easy to reconcile with their preconceived standards of doctrinal belief. Among the dogmas most distasteful to them were Original Sin, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. Now, the first of these is closely connected with the opening chapters of Genesis; the second with the stories of the Virgin-birth in the Synoptics, the discourses in the Fourth Gospel, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the later Pauline Epistles; and the last with certain prophetic passages interpreted as referring to Christ—all documents

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peculiarly discredited by modern German research. Anglican divines sometimes boast that their position has been strengthened by the higher criticism. But the claim might be far more truly made by the heretics whom they most detest, by the modern successors of Locke and Priestley.

On more than one occasion in the course of this narrative it may have been noticed how Unitarian ideas have acted as a decomposing ferment on English theology. Coleridge was first estranged from orthodoxy by the example of William Frend; and although his return to the Church was marked by exceptionally bitter attacks, continued through life, on those whom he called Socinians, yet the impress of their heresies remained on his religion to the end. In his esoteric teaching the First and Third Persons of the Trinity seem to have been volatilised into abstractions, while the second Hypostasis is only personal during its earthly union with Jesus of Nazareth. Adam is a myth; the Fall means the dissociation of finite, self-conscious individuals from the Absolute One; and the Atonement, whatever else it may mean, certainly does not mean a transfer of God's wrath from the guilty to the innocent.

At a later period Charles Bray owes his first doubts to arguments with a Unitarian; his brother-in-law, Charles Hennell, who was bred a Unitarian, makes the first critical examination of the Gospels undertaken by an Englishman; and as a result of reading it, Marian Evans renounces her Evangelical creed. Emerson, who began life as a Unitarian minister, powerfully influences the younger Oxford men; and Theodore Parker, a very advanced Unitarian for those times, by his translation of De Wette makes Old Testament criticism accessible to English readers, as Marian Evans throws open New Testament criticism by her translation of Strauss.

Probably no writer of the age better represented these critical tendencies as they were received and transmitted by the Unitarian intelligence, or gave them so wide a diffusion, as William Rathbone Greg. Born in 1809, he belonged to a family eminent even among the Unitarians for their admirable qualities of intellect and character. They were mill-owners, but combined business with a wide literary and scientific culture. Young Greg did not succeed in business, and eventually devoted

himself almost entirely to literature. His studies in the early forties seem to have brought him into contact with the religious problems left for reconsideration by the pietistic movement as it slowly ebbed away. Between 1845 and 1848 he wrote a book on 'the Creed of Christendom,' apparently in the first instance to clear up his own thoughts on the subject, and without any immediate view to publication. The conclusions come to are, 'that the tenet of the Inspiration of the Scriptures is baseless and untenable under any form or modification which leaves to it a dogmatic value;—that the Gospels are not textually faithful records of the sayings and actions of Jesus, but, occasionally at least, ascribe to him words which he never uttered and deeds which he never did;—and that the Apostles only partially comprehended and imperfectly transmitted the teaching of their Great Master.'[1]

The topics dealt with in the 'Creed of Christendom' cover the same ground as those discussed in 'Phases of Faith'; but from the nature of the case Greg's treatment of them is more complete and systematic than Newman's. The lines of thought first opened in modern England by Coleridge, Milman, Thirlwall, and Dr. Arnold, are continued under the guidance of De Wette, Strauss, and such other Germans as had been translated since their time, but with far greater boldness than was possible to them, and not without the common sense engendered by business habits. Greg's general tone is more conciliatory than Newman's, and his attitude towards the Founder of Christianity widely different. 'We regard him,' it is said, 'as the perfection of the spiritual character,—as surpassing all men of all times in the closeness and depth of his communion with the Father. In reading his sayings we feel that we are holding converse with the wisest, purest, noblest Being that ever clothed thought in the poor language of humanity.'[2] Greg, in fact, considered himself a Christian, and continued to claim the title through life, notwithstanding the cutting epigram of Fitzjames Stephen, who compared him to a disciple 'who had heard the Sermon on the Mount, whose attention had not been called to the miracles, and who died before the Resurrection.'[3] It may be added that he was rather sceptical about a future life, and did

[1] 'Creed of Christendom,' Preface, p. c. (8th ed.).
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 168. [3] 'Life of Sir J. F. Stephen,' p. 213.

not believe that God's will could be affected by prayer. But this inconsistency, if such it were, need not prevent his being classed with the conciliatory rationalistic group of the fifties rather than with the revolutionary group of the late forties.

The 'Creed of Christendom' was not published until between two and three years after its completion. The author explains this long suspense by his unwillingness to do what 'might unsettle and destroy the faith of many.' But this consideration finally gave way to the obligation of contributing to the advance of truth; to a sense of the mischief wrought by the belief in Biblical infallibility, involving as it did the authority of some Scriptural passages which seemed 'to condemn the good and to denounce the true'; and to the desire to help those who were struggling with similar difficulties. Newman's 'Phases of Faith' is mentioned in this connexion as a work which powerfully contributed to his conviction that a radical change in the prevalent view of Biblical authority was called for,—an important testimony to the epoch-making significance of what may more truly be called a Tract for the Times than any of the elder Newman's pamphlets.

The 'Creed of Christendom' had a sale which, though not large, was singularly steady and continuous, two editions being disposed of in twenty-two years. Mr. John Morley tells us that he can well remember the share it had during the late fifties in 'shaking the fabric of early beliefs in some of the most active minds' at Oxford.[1] But after 1873, when the third edition appeared, its popularity seems to have enormously increased, for the eighth edition is dated only ten years later (1883). Then the demand suddenly ceased—two remarkable facts, the explanation of which must be reserved for a later chapter.

Rathbone Greg considered that the work he did could only be undertaken by a layman. When he began to write the clergy of the Church of England were not free enquirers; and but for pioneers like him they might never have become so. However, it seems curious that he overlooked what might be done by the ministers of his own denomination. Among these James Martineau takes far the highest place, and in the ranks of English divines his place is among the first. With a genius

[1] 'Miscellanies,' Vol. III., p. 242.

high and intense rather than broad and comprehensive, and a style which impresses much more than it attracts, he yet proved singularly fitted for the part of a mediator between the old and the new theology. In Biblical criticism he represented the most advanced views of his time, in natural religion and in ethics the most retrograde. Both positions were the result of a gradual evolution in his own mind, accomplished under Germanic influences; and while the one gave him a voice in the councils of reason, the other gave him a voice in the councils of faith.

Under the guidance of Priestley Unitarianism had become associated with determinism in morals and with empiricism in psychology. Thus it happened that Martineau's own earliest convictions were formed in the school of Bentham and James Mill. It is curious to hear that at this stage any reserves and misgivings on his part were overborne by his sister Harriet's 'acute, rapid, and incisive advance to a conclusion upon every point.'[1] Like the two Newmans, the two Martineaus started from the same ideal basis, and each retained to the end one of the elements into which it split under the stress of a dissolving dialectic. The sister, holding fast to her philosophy of determinism and experience, ultimately became a convert to Positivism. The brother, holding fast to his religion of personal theism, found his way to accepting freewill together with as many intuitions as were needed to save the necessity of proving his position—the sort of half-mysticism which is a compromise between reason and tradition. In this instance also, as in the Coventry group, more fearless consistency is displayed by the woman than by the man.

The decisive intellectual breach occurred in 1839. At that date Harriet had ceased to believe in a future life, while James Martineau's conversion to philosophical spiritualism was complete. Such a philosophy, however, is no more compatible than any other with the old dogmas—less compatible even, because it gives the moral judgments of civilised society an absolute value. It also drew him into sympathy with German thought, and led him to study for a year in Germany. In this way he became acquainted with a method of New Testament criticism more destructive to the old traditions than any hitherto employed, the method of Baur.

[1] 'Life of James Martineau,' Vol. II., p. 262.

The great scholar whom I have named offers a shining example of the truth that philosophy is not indebted to physical science for the idea of evolution, having possessed and applied it to history, especially religious history, while naturalists were still clinging to their immutable species. Baur had worked himself free from the supernaturalism of his youth in the school of Schleiermacher: in the school of Hegel he had learned to follow the process by which thought is unfolded from thought. Finally, his studies in the early history of Christianity convinced him that it represents such a development, but that the successive stages of the process have been telescoped by an arrangement attributing books whose composition extends over more than a century to the generation which immediately succeeded the Crucifixion. Baur supposes that the first disciples of Jesus formed a narrow Judaising party; that St. Paul, under the influence of Greek thought, first clearly conceived Christianity as a world-wide religion; that the Church grew from the conflict and reconciliation of their contrasted views; that the Catholic dogmas arose one by one from the necessities of this gradual adjustment; that the canonical books embodying the more exalted ideas of Christ's nature are relatively recent; and that the Fourth Gospel, where the Incarnation appears full-blown, is the most recent of all.

A band of able writers, among whom Eduard Zeller and Albert Schwegler may be mentioned as having won an independent reputation by their researches in other departments of learning, gathered round Baur at Tübingen, and helped to work out his scheme in detail. It was also adopted by scholars more remotely connected with the school, among others by David Strauss, who had originally approached the New Testament problem on quite different lines. As often happens in such investigations, the original theory with its Hegelian scaffolding of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, had only a provisional importance. What remained was the discredit thrown on several Epistles hitherto accepted by most theologians as first-hand documents for the history of dogma in the earliest times, and above all the reduction of the Fourth Gospel from the record of an eye-witness to a religious allegory of the second century. Christ's testimony to his own divinity, and the attestation given to his claim by the raising of Lazarus, fell under the same

stroke. Dr. Arnold's 'impregnable fortress of Christianity,' already shown to be indefensible by Francis Newman, was reduced by the new batteries to a heap of ruins.

Baur's results must have speedily become known to English students, for they are quoted and adopted by R. W. Mackay in his 'Progress of the Intellect' (1850), a work which was received with considerable applause by the freethinking group associated with George Eliot, but which, apart from its reference to the Tübingen views, has no value whatever. Far more important, though less outspoken, was the adhesion given by James Martineau three years later in a paper entitled 'Creed and Heresies of Early Christianity.'[1] It contains a very condensed but full summary of Baur's theory, and an answer to what Bunsen supposed to be the fatal objection to 'the Tübingen romance,' furnished by the newly discovered manuscript of Hippolytus. Martineau saw at once how much Unitarianism gained by the introduction of development into early Christianity—assuming, of course, that its earliest was also its most genuine form. Priestley had 'maintained that the creed of the Church during the first two centuries was Unitarian. But this view was attended with many difficulties so long as the present canonical Scriptures were allowed to have been in the hands of the Christians of that period, and recognised as authorities; for the narratives of the miraculous conception, the writings of Paul, and the Gospel of John, are irreconcilable with the scheme of belief attributed to the early Unitarians.' These difficulties, of course, disappear with the acceptance of the Tübingen theory, which includes Priestley's 'with a vast deal more.'[2]

Martineau did not again take the field as a Biblical critic in any great force until thirty-seven years later, when he once more came forward as a defender of the most advanced German views. Otherwise, his activity in the fifties, so far as it aided the spread of rationalism, consisted in brilliant defences of ethical theism against the assaults of orthodox apologists who tried to make the position of its adherents too hot to hold them; and in trenchant criticisms on the orthodox dogmas which were most objectionable to Unitarians. With the exception of

[1] 'Westminster Review' for April, 1853. Reprinted in 'Studies of Christianity' (1858).

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 249.

a few special organs the periodical press still remained closed to heterodox theology; but Martineau made himself heard through those few. Of these the 'Prospective Review' was exclusively Unitarian, and lived only for ten years. Much more important was the 'Westminster Review.' It had long been the organ of the Philosophical Radicals, and with their extinction as a body had come to represent advanced liberalism along the whole line, theology included. In 1852 it began a new series under the management of John Chapman, the publisher, and Marian Evans, who enlisted the support of the strongest band of contributors then to be found in the British Islands. Among these were Miss Evans herself, Froude, W. R. Greg, G. H. Lewes, James Martineau, Francis Newman, Herbert Spencer, and, somewhat later, Mark Pattison. Carlyle and Mill also wrote for it, though very rarely. On religious topics the tone, while far bolder than would have been tolerated fifteen years earlier, still remained cautious and respectful. Martineau, however, seems to have felt ill at ease among associates who were out of sympathy with his positive convictions. Accordingly after a few years he severed his connexion with the 'Westminster,' and joined in getting up a new organ called the 'National Review,' in which the old 'Prospective' was merged. 'National' would have been a singular misnomer had the new organ been, what it has been called, a Unitarian review. But the description is hardly accurate. No doubt the theological articles were written by Unitarians, but their tone was studiously unsectarian, and in some ways rather sympathetic with the Church of England. Literature, scholarship, science, and politics were largely represented; and two at least of the most brilliant contributors, Edward Freeman and Walter Bagehot, were at the time orthodox rather than Unitarian; while the review enjoyed the moral, and it is said even the material, support of Lady Byron, a liberal Churchwoman.

A significant circumstance was that the 'National Review' should be published by such a high-class firm as Chapman and Hall. Hitherto John Chapman had been the only 'respectable' publisher in London who would risk the responsibility of bringing out anything that might be called of a dangerous character in theology. Now, the first number of the 'National' contained something that, judged by the opinions then prevalent, seemed

very dangerous indeed. The writer of an article on Ewald's 'Life of Christ' suggested that some at least of the Gospel miracles were fairly explicable on the mythic theory; and subsequent papers on doctrinal questions were not calculated to weaken the painful impression thus produced.

An essay of James Martineau's entitled 'Personal Influence on Present Theology' appeared in one of the early numbers. While nominally devoted to the teaching of J. H. Newman, Coleridge, and Carlyle, it is really nothing but a glorification of F. D. Maurice, who is represented as having worked out Coleridge's principles to systematic completeness. Here we find a signal exemplification of the close contact existing between Unitarianism and the Broad or liberal party within the Church of England.

There is more than a touch of irony about the position into which Maurice found himself forced. Belonging to no party, not ambitious of founding a school, abjuring the names of liberal and Broad Churchman, strictly and sincerely loyal to the creeds and articles of the Anglican Communion, this great theologian—the greatest perhaps produced by England in the nineteenth century—ranked in popular estimation with such latitudinarians as Stanley and Jowett. And public opinion, however grievously mistaken in its estimate of the man, had rightly estimated the inevitable drift of his teaching.

Maurice has already been named among the distinguished men who, being fully capable of attaining high eminence outside the clerical profession, were swept into Anglican orders by the current of religious enthusiasm which prevailed during the twenty-five years from 1814 to 1839. With him the excitement was even more powerfully manifested than with any of his contemporaries, for he had first to be won over from Unitarianism to the Catholic faith. His mother and sisters preceded him in abandoning that community, in which the father, Michael Maurice, was a minister, either for the Church of England or for some form of orthodox Dissent. Deliverance from sin through the blood of Christ seems to have been the attraction for all alike. The elder Maurice alone remained unmoved. Such differences of religious opinion in a single family gave Frederick Maurice the idea of a truth deeper than

opinion, in which all discords were reconciled. After various wanderings and experiments in living, he received baptism (very unnecessarily as would appear) in 1831, and took orders three years afterwards.

In modern times the controversy between the Unitarians and their Catholic opponents has turned on moral much more than on metaphysical questions. Some philosophers, or rather theosophists, have managed to persuade themselves that an absolute and infinite Being is more intelligible when thought of as having three persons combined in a unity of substance, than when thought of as having or consisting of only one. But for people in general such high speculations have no meaning. Not only the man in the street but the man in the study passes them by with a sneer or a sigh. The dogma of Christ's divinity has a religious value simply because religionists have assumed that sin, being an offence against God, merits an eternity of suffering, and that his just vengeance can only be bought off by the transfer of the penalty to a being of infinite goodness, a divine Redeemer. On the other hand, monotheism has from the first been an irreversible postulate of Christianity. Therefore, these two, the offended Law-giver and the reconciling Saviour, must somehow be one God while retaining their distinct personalities. The metaphysical mystery was accepted for the sake of the supposed moral solution.

But once established at the heart of religion, this mystery of unity in plurality could not fail to exercise a powerful fascination on all minds of a mystical tendency, offering them as it did a type and support for their love of the self-contradictory as such, an instalment of the fundamental unity, the All-One for which they craved. Coleridge had such a mind; and in him the metaphysical passion, fed by indulgence in opium, was the more freely gratified because it worked in perfect harmony with the religious sense of sin, the genuine conviction of personal unworthiness, due to that same habit of opium-eating combined with other intemperance.

Maurice never met Coleridge, but is said to have been deeply impressed by his philosophy. Intellectually he was much the stronger thinker; while morally there can be no comparison between one of the worthiest and one of the weakest of good men. But Maurice had a rare faculty for receiving

instruction from those whose general ways of thinking and acting were most unlike his own; and in this instance there was at least one point of agreement. Both were deep students of Alexandrian speculation; and the synthetic tendencies of the nineteenth century, felt even more by Maurice than by Coleridge, were in his case reinforced by family experiences where love was found more potent to reunite than differences of opinion to divide. The result was a mystical faith, twining round traditional creeds and formularies for support, but reinterpreting them with a freedom which, in the judgment of most believers, took away their original meaning and replaced it by a dangerous heresy, by something, in fact, very like the old Unitarianism of the new doctor.

Maurice, to begin with, refused to recognise the sense of sin as the foundation of religion. Indeed, he rather disliked the word religion as savouring of heathenism, and preferred to say theology.

Our foundation should be God alone, conceived as a plurality of wills united in obedience and love. Humanity has been eternally received into the embrace of this divine unity, and sin, which is essentially nothing but wilfulness, a spirit of self-assertion and revolt, has been eternally forgiven through that oneness of the Divine Persons with each other. Revelation conveys a knowledge of this eternal fact to the sinful soul, which cannot receive it without being reconciled.

In this view there can be no question of reconciling an alienated Father by the transference of his vengeance to the head of an innocent Son; and the Unitarians are quite justified in their protest against such a confusion of moral distinctions as that parody of the Atonement would imply. And indeed the false view, when logically worked out, inevitably leads to a disruption of the divine unity by representing the Father and the Son as totally contrasted in their attitudes towards man, the one being all hatred, the other all love. This was Milton's view, and it is responsible for the Arianism of his theological treatise. But the Unitarians on their side are mistaken in fancying that filial subordination excludes equality; while their doctrine of a uni-personal God exposes us to 'the necessity and the horror of ascribing self-will to the Author of All.' [1]

[1] Maurice's 'Doctrine of Sacrifice,' p. 109.

Maurice interprets the Third Person of the Trinity as a spirit uniting the Will commanding with the Will obeying. That Spirit is the divine life in regenerate man, emphasised in an exclusive manner by the Quakers, but recognised also, and more completely, by the Church.

Eternal life and eternal death are states of the soul not related to time. To know and love God is eternal life: to be separated from God is eternal death. Maurice could not accept the Unitarian idea that the souls of the wicked would be saved after undergoing a finite period of punishment. What good would that be, he asked, if *they* remained the same, without knowledge of God? Even in Heaven their state would be worse than any hell. But he also refused to set any limit to the future action of divine love. There is hope for all, even for the lost: let that suffice.

A strong probability that all persons who did not accept the Atonement in the sense of substituted suffering would be condemned after death to never-ending torment was at that time the fundamental dogma of English Protestantism. To the free-thinker it was just what more than any other dogma made religion incredible. Maurice claimed to be restoring the true interpretation of certain Scriptural phrases, without allowing any weight to sentimental considerations. Yet perhaps here, also, his early Unitarian training may have affected his thoughts to a greater extent than he was aware of. At any rate, the orthodox tradition was against him, and he was driven from his professorship at King's College, London, by the action of its Principal, Dr. Jelf. Outside clerical circles a large body of public opinion declared itself in his favour, for reasons with which he had little sympathy; and his friend, Charles Kingsley, gave occasional expression to this more popular view in his sermons and novels.

At the time when Maurice was first becoming a prominent figure in theological controversy, a much younger clergyman, F. W. Robertson, best known as Robertson of Brighton, was exercising a somewhat similar influence, and giving a more eloquent expression to somewhat similar views, having arrived at them, as would seem, by an independent course of study. He too stood aloof from all parties, but was opposed on

essential points to the Evangelicals, in whose tenets he had been brought up, and to the High Church, at whom he struck in criticising what he called Romanist doctrines. Like Maurice, or perhaps even more than Maurice, he accepts the principle of an inward light, that phosphorescence of religious belief in decay. 'There is,' he proclaimed from his Brighton pulpit, 'there is an inward state of heart which makes truth credible the moment it is stated. . . . The thing is to believe, not because we are learned or can prove, but because there is something in us, even God's own Spirit, which makes us feel light as light and truth as truth:—that is the blessed faith.'[1] 'An inspiration as true, as real, and as certain as that which ever prophet or apostle reached is yours if you will.'[2] Unfortunately this illumination, so freely granted to all, produces quite different arrangements of light and shade according to the shape, furniture, and aperture of the camera obscura which receives it. Robertson openly denounces the interpretation of the Atonement accepted as self-evidencing truth by the Evangelicals whom he had forsaken. 'Let no man say that Christ bore the wrath of God. . . . Christ came into collision with the world's evil and He bore the penalty of that daring.'[3] 'Entire surrender to the Divine Will is the only perfect Sacrifice . . . all other notions are false. Whatever introduces the conception of vindictiveness or retaliation, whatever speaks of appeasing fury; whatever estimates the value of the Saviour's sacrifice by the "penalty paid"; whatever differs from those notions of sacrifice contained in psalms and prophets —is borrowed from the bloody shambles of Heathenism and not from Jewish altars.'[4]

With equal trenchancy he dismisses the notion of inherited guilt, held as firmly by the mystical Dr. Newman as by any Calvinist. 'Original sin is not the guilt of an ancestor imputed to an innocent descendant, but it is the tendencies of that ancestor, living in his offspring and incurring guilt. Original sin can be forgiven only in so far as original sin is removed. It is not Adam's; it is yours.'[5]

[1] Sermon preached on Easter Day, March 27, 1853.
[2] Sermon for April 29, 1849.
[3] Sermon for November 25, 1849.
[4] Christmas Day, 1851.
[5] March 17, 1850.

Here we have reason entering into a weak and futile compromise with barbaric superstition. Inherited tendencies are not guilt, they are temptations, or, in purely ethical language, motives to do wrong. Whether such motives arise from heredity or from accidental variation, or from disease, or from some peculiar combination of circumstances, is morally irrelevant. In any case, the strength of the motive or temptation, whichever we choose to call it, not its source, is the thing to be considered; and in proportion to its strength it counts, everywhere outside theology, not in aggravation but in extenuation of the fault. Moreover, to talk of forgiving original sin is a thoroughly confused expression, if we adopt Robertson's interpretation of the phrase. For acts only can be forgiven, not tendencies; and the removal of the tendency leaves the necessity of an atonement for the act, if it be a wrong one, in full force. *That* certainly is not Adam's—whatever Adam may mean;—but the nature and extent of our responsibility for it needs to be more carefully defined.

On the other hand, it would be unfair to speak as if Maurice and Robertson were wresting Scriptural texts to a new meaning when they quoted them in defence of their own mystical doctrine. In reality they were much nearer the mark than their Evangelical opponents. The explanation of this curious fact is that the prophets, psalmists, and apostles, being in a position very like theirs, were seeking like them to reconcile reason with authority by a mystical interpretation of inherited beliefs. And modern research has made it highly probable that even 'the shambles of heathenism'—to which the shambles of Judaism exhibited a strong family resemblance—bore witness to a primaeval mysticism, a mysterious identification of the worshipper with the victim, and of both with the God to whom it was offered. Originally, however, this strange communism had nothing to do with morality, except in so far as whatever strengthens the feeling of solidarity in the tribe makes for the devotion of each individual to the common good of all. But in modern times at least it seems hazardous to connect the duties of citizenship with ideas so difficult to understand, and so open to criticism when they are understood. Such criticism was freely applied by James Martineau, who took the fullest advantage of the concessions made to Unitarianism by the new school

of Anglican theology, while showing that they pointed towards a surrender of the whole orthodox position.

Maurice was a timid conservative in Biblical criticism, and looked with suspicion on that free handling of inspiration which, like his own doctrinal innovations, took its rise from the study of Coleridge and its increase from Germanic influence. Robertson, who had resided for some time at Heidelberg, and had even translated Lessing's 'Education of the Human Race,' felt that influence to some extent, though it cannot, I believe, be traced in his sermons, where the historical truth of Scripture from beginning to end seems to be assumed. In his weekday lectures he showed that Genesis had been made up out of two distinct documents—then and long afterwards a dangerous novelty for the religious world of England—but still ascribed the work of compilation to Moses.

A much more serious shock was given to the public opinion of Brighton, or at least to clerical opinion, by his protest against the prevalent Sabbatarianism, which condemned even a country walk on Sunday as a breach of the fourth Commandment.[1] Alone among the clergymen of Brighton he refused to join in a petition against opening the Crystal Palace on the day of rest, although personally objecting to the devotion of any part of Sunday to the amusements which it afforded. The authority of the New Testament is, as he points out, quite decisive on the matter; and his argument, although in form an appeal to authority, really marks an advance, if a small one, in the spread of rationalism; for it involves the destructive action of reason on a religious belief.

Even then the Sabbatarians were only a minority, and possibly a very small minority, of the people of England. But they were powerful and united enough to turn the scale in any contested election, a position which enabled them to put an irresistible pressure on the Administration. Even so popular a minister as Lord Palmerston had to give way when his policy came into conflict with their fanatical superstition. He had given permission for the regimental bands to play in the Parks on Sunday, but withdrew it on being threatened by a vote of censure which seemed likely to be carried if he resisted. It was arranged that this should be done ostensibly in deference

[1] Sermon for October 28, 1849.

to a remonstrance from the Archbishop of Canterbury, who affected to speak in the name of public opinion; but those who were behind the scenes knew perfectly well what this pretension was worth.[1] Clearly a much more drastic argument than texts from St. Paul was needed before this shameful tabu could be overcome.

A social observer of great acuteness and wide experience has credited the Oxford Movement with the break-up of Evangelical tyranny. But this is an optimistic view arising from the tendency to find good in everything, even in reactionary sacerdotalism, which history does not confirm. The truth is that in the fifties, long after Newman's secession, the Evangelicals were stronger than ever, and had won over the State to their exclusive support. Bad as was the tyrant, the people had no mind to kill him to make his Romanising brother king. Salvation came from the Broad Church, whose services on this occasion have some analogy with those rendered to democracy by the Whigs of the Reform Bill. A first breach had been made in the fortifications of privilege by Bentham and his radical following. But the actual storm and conquest could only be affected by the party of progress under the guidance of its old aristocratic leaders. Lord Grey and his colleagues were vehemently denounced by the Tories as traitors to their order; and there was little cordiality between them and their Benthamite allies. But their appeal to posterity has not been made in vain, and it will now be generally admitted that they did a work which no other party could have done so well. And now also in the struggle for spiritual emancipation the English people were unconsciously waiting for their clergy to take the lead, as they had taken it before under Henry VIII. and Charles II. In accepting the post they laid themselves open, like the Whigs, to a charge of half-heartedness and treason. But like the Whigs, they saved the situation and ended some intolerable abuses, succeeding where more thorough-going reformers would have failed.

Rathbone Greg had justified his intervention in the theological arena on the ground that the work of overthrowing Biblical infallibility had to be performed by an unfettered

[1] 'Greville Memoirs,' Part III., p. 313.

layman. Yet less than six years after the publication of his 'Creed of Christendom' a more effective blow was struck on the same side by a clergyman, the Rev. John Macnaught, incumbent of St. Chrysostom's Church, Everton, Liverpool, in the shape of a small volume on 'The Doctrine of Inspiration.' Its object is to show that the Bible, while possessing the highest claims on our affection and veneration, has no claim to infallibility, and that in point of fact it contains some important errors. The author carefully excludes scientific considerations from his purview in order to guard against the reply that 'science is as yet only in its infancy, and we therefore know not what its ultimate decision may be.'[1] A few skilfully chosen instances of discrepancies between the Gospel narratives, and one or two more from the Old Testament, with a general reference to De Wette and Strauss, suffice to establish the fallibility of Scripture in matters of history. So far Macnaught is able to quote the authority of sundry bishops on his side. But these writers exclude the possibility of religious error, and, to use a phrase since grown familiar, admit Biblical infallibility in faith and morals. He goes further still, boldly impugning certain passages in both Testaments as ethically or doctrinally untrue. Among these are the praise given to Jael for the murder of Sisera; the denial of man's immortality by certain Psalmists; and, what is most remarkable, St. Paul's declaration that but for the resurrection a life of self-indulgence would be the most reasonable choice.

Macnaught concludes by showing that his theory of inspiration as not necessarily involving infallibility, may be honestly held by one who has undertaken the responsibilities of an Anglican clergyman; a contention fully confirmed not many years afterwards by the highest legal authority in the kingdom. His own views subsequently became so advanced that he felt obliged to resign his benefice and to withdraw from the ministry for a time. Whether after this his creed became more conservative or his notions of clerical latitude more liberal I cannot say; but he certainly sought and obtained readmission to the fold, giving occasion to a not very brilliant witticism on the part of Whately, who deprecated the appearance of 'ticket-of-leave clergymen' in the pulpit.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

The 'Doctrine of Inspiration' reached a second edition in six months, and a fifth edition the year after its publication. A still more noteworthy fact is that it was published by Messrs. Longmans, a firm whose name also stands on the title-page of two collections of very heterodox essays by James Martineau, and who also brought out the first edition of Herbert Spencer's 'Psychology' (1855).

Macnaught tells us that his work received the general approbation, among others, of Professors Jowett and Baden Powell, of the Rev. Rowland Williams, and of the Rev. H. B. Wilson, Fellow and Tutor of St. John's College, Oxford,—that is to say of four out of the seven whose names were soon to be blazoned over England as contributors to 'Essays and Reviews.' That volume was in truth the final and condensed result of a fermentation which had been working all through the fifties, but failed to attract general attention until it took the form of a collective manifestation, recalling the Tractarian movement of an earlier epoch by its spirit of revolt against accepted standards.

Macnaught himself was an Oxford man, and of the four divines whom he quotes three were Oxonians. Similarly the leaders in the great revolt of the late forties and early fifties, Francis Newman, J. A. Froude, Clough, and Matthew Arnold, belonged to the same university, as also, without exception, did the group of English Positivists, Congreve, Frederic Harrison, Bridges, Beesley, and Cotter Morison, followed with more freedom by John Morley. And when we recall the fact that in earlier ages Oxford had bred such men as Wycliffe, Locke, Tindal, Gibbon, Bentham, and Shelley, it seems strange that such a focus of innovation should be celebrated by Matthew Arnold for its fidelity to lost causes. The same remark might have been made with equal justice—or one-sidedness—of France, the foreign country with which Oxford has always been most intimately associated. Both have done much to keep the past alive, but more to hasten the birth of the future. Nor has the other great English University been invariably found on the winning side. Just now, as it happens, Cambridge, or at least one of its Colleges, is further advanced on the road to complete rationalism than Oxford. But half a century ago this was certainly not the case. Writing in 1853, Dr. Whewell, the

foremost man at Cambridge, absolutely denies that rationalism is spreading among the cultivated classes;[1] while Keble, one of the heads of the Oxford Movement, and presumably still in touch with his university, shows himself painfully aware of the new danger.[2]

At a time when attention was first drawn to this significant contrast between the two ancient seats of learning, a notion then and afterwards widely current was called in to explain it. People observed that by a natural reaction Romanism gave birth to infidelity, and a too exclusive reliance on authority to a reliance, equally exclusive, on human reason. To avoid the one was to escape the other. And so while Oxford was passing from a hot to a cold fit in religion, Cambridge calmly pursued her sober way, the very Via Media about which her sister had vainly boasted, and as one of her own children had put it, 'turned to scorn the falsehood of extremes.'

I have already taken occasion to express my opinion—which for the rest has no claim to originality—about this theory of reactions. It seems to me superficial and misleading. Experience does not seem to show that the same persons readily pass from one extreme to another. But it often happens that an active, united, and clamorous minority make it seem as if their opinions were accepted by the whole community. Then after a time other and perhaps older streams of tendency, represented by other minorities, recover from their temporary depression, come to the surface, and give their name to the general line of movement.

This, at any rate, was what happened at Oxford when the Movement which had taken its name from her went to pieces. Early in the nineteenth century there had been formed what was called a Noetic School in the common-room of Oriel, that is a school of close reasoners, whose aim was to account to themselves for things, not to take them on authority. At its head stood Whately, with whom Arnold, Blanco White, and Hampden seem to have been more or less intimately associated; while their contemporary, Milman, showed that the critical spirit was not limited to a single college. These distinguished scholars and thinkers were really Broad Churchmen, although the name

[1] 'Life of William Whewell,' by Mrs. Stair Douglas, p. 431.

[2] 'Life of Keble,' by Sir John Coleridge, p. 423.

did not come into use until long afterwards. Naturally the Tractarians regarded them with the bitterest hostility; while they kept up a continual protest against Newmanism, and carried on directly, or by their successors, a liberal tradition, which on Newman's secession stepped into its place.

The philosophical and historical studies which so markedly distinguished Oxford from Cambridge must have contributed largely to the new liberal movement, particularly when Mill's 'Logic,' Grote's 'Greece,' and Lewes's 'History of Philosophy,' came to enter into the course of reading for the final schools. These works did much to spread the fame of Auguste Comte; and Halford Vaughan's inaugural lecture on modern history, delivered in 1848, helped to impress the idea of historical evolution on an audience thrilled with interest and surprise.

In the mean time another philosophy, more congenial to the place, and destined to achieve an even greater success than Positivism at Oxford, had already gained a footing within its precincts. As was pointed out in a former chapter, Hegel seems to have first become known in England through Strauss's 'Life of Jesus,' which was certainly talked about at Oxford in 1844, if not earlier; and in 1846 we find a clerical tutor of Balliol reported to be 'deep in Hegel.'[1] A few years later Sir William Hamilton mentions that 'Hegelianism is reputed to be making way at Oxford;'[2] while the satire on Hegel in Mansel's 'Phrontisterion,' written at about the same date, shows with what alarm the advance was viewed by a bigoted conservative.

Thus Oxford combined a great interest in theology, inherited from the Tractarian movement, with a still greater interest in the new philosophy by which all theology was being explained away and superseded. At Cambridge, on the other hand, general indifference prevailed with regard to both studies, until attention was drawn to them once more by unexpected developments at the sister University.

The clerical tutor of Balliol 'deep in Hegel' of whom Francis Newman wrote, can hardly have been other than Benjamin Jowett. To give a complete estimate of this remarkable man is beyond my power; nor is there any particular need of one in

[1] 'Life of James Martineau,' Vol. II., p. 320.
[2] 'Discussions on Philosophy,' p. 788.

the present connexion. It will, I think, be generally admitted that his influence, first as an Oxford teacher on his immediate pupils, and then on the far wider circle of those who felt it only through his books, was a factor of first-rate importance in the history of English thought during the second half of the nineteenth century. And it will also be admitted, though perhaps with more reluctance, that this influence told chiefly as a disintegrating force, as a solvent of dogmas and fixed convictions of all sorts. So far, it made for rationalism; and the popular estimate of his position, both among rationalists and among religious believers, would reckon him as one of its foremost champions. As it happened, however, his scepticism extended to logic, enabling him to hold two contradictory propositions at the same time; and also to hold a proposition without accepting all the consequences that accurate reasoning would show to be deducible from it. And not only could he reconcile such license with his intellectual conscience, but, what was still more convenient for an academical teacher in Holy Orders, he could habitually employ words, and induce others to employ them, in a sense totally different from that in which they were generally used, or had originally been intended by those who constructed the formularies of the established Church. Whether the cause of rationalism has in the long run been served by this twofold violation of logical sincerity can hardly as yet be determined. On the one hand, great numbers of disbelievers in the more incredible parts of Christian theology have been enabled to follow a clerical career, and to clear away a mass of popular superstition by simply letting it drop out of their sermons and conversations. On the other hand, systematic trifling with reason seems not precisely the best way of making it prevail; and the constant repetition of certain formulas as if they were true seems to facilitate the restoration, in times of weariness and retrogression, of the living faith with which they once were filled. This at any rate was what happened in the eighteenth century, when, as Wilberforce could justly boast, 'our inestimable Liturgy'[1] kept alive that cycle of primitive superstitions which the high Greek morality inculcated from the pulpit had superseded for a hundred years.

Like the Newmans, Jowett had been brought up as an

[1] 'Practical View of Christianity,' p. 412.

Evangelical; and but for the changed intellectual conditions which prevailed during his early manhood, he might have chosen one of the straightforward courses by which they found their way out of an untenable position. As it was, he observed, half ironically, that 'but for some divine providence' he 'might have become a Roman Catholic.'[1] W. G. Ward's marriage was the means appointed for his salvation. 'After that,' he tells us, 'the Tractarian impulse subsided, and while some of us took to German Philosophy, others turned to lobster suppers and champagne. They called that "being unworldly."'[2] But in fact the Germanic movement had begun some time before Ward's dramatic exit from the University, whatever share that event may have had in the austerities of less studious devotees. Jowett himself had been travelling in Germany the previous summer, using the opportunity to consult Erdmann about 'the best manner of approaching the works of Hegel'; and on returning to Oxford he found Froude 'regularly Germanised.'[3] Indeed his own doubts about the Gospels had been first aroused by Scott's lectures on Niebuhr.[4] Evidently what saved him from Ward's fate was no single intervention, but a deep-laid scheme of Providence.

Coleridge worked out his philosophy chiefly under the guidance of Hegel's German predecessors; but it may have been at the direct suggestion of Hegel that he learned to distinguish between the Understanding and the Reason, explaining Reason as a faculty which somehow enables us to believe in self-contradictory ideas, just because they involve a contradiction. Such a method of conception seemed peculiarly fitted to make the Catholic mysteries more credible. A shallow rationalist may hold that theism and pantheism exclude one another: God cannot be both absolute and personal. But on rising to a higher synthesis the difficulty vanishes, or rather it becomes the solution. Jowett entered the same school at a higher grade, where the fogs of mysticism had been left behind. What was more, he learned to use the dialectic method as a solvent for itself, a menstruum in which Hegel's scholastic pedantry disappeared. 'A student of Hegel,' he tells us, 'does not regret the time spent in the study of him. He finds that he has

[1] 'Life,' Vol. I., p. 74.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 111.
[4] P. 59.

received from him a real enlargement of mind and much of the true spirit of philosophy even when he has ceased to believe in him. . . . He shows us that only by the study of metaphysics can we get rid of metaphysics, and that those who are in theory most opposed to them are in fact most entirely and hopelessly enslaved by them.'[1]

Here there is a promise of a more complete emancipation than Comte and Mill could grant; but also perhaps the threat of a future confusion of the intellectual with the volitional and emotional spheres, of ophelism as a method of faith.

In 1846 Jowett read the 'Vestiges,' and was disgusted with Sedgwick's attack on it. The book, he thinks, may be all wrong, but is not in principle more hostile to religion than are the admitted truths of science. 'All science tends to demonstration, to lock up the world under a series of causes and effects. It is no use to make religion fill up the interstices of science which are merely accidental.'[2]

His first interest, however, is New Testament criticism, which of course he studies under German guidance. 'Nothing can exceed the absurdities which the English divines have talked about' the Synoptic problem. After planning a critical work which was to have included a discussion of the Gospels, he ultimately restricted himself to a few of St. Paul's Epistles. Here the best help came from Baur's work, 'the ablest book' he has 'ever read' on the subject.[3] He also acquaints himself with the Tübingen theory of the Fourth Gospel, and sums up the arguments on both sides in a letter to Arthur Stanley, with an apparent preference for the denial of its authority.[4] It is not surprising that by the beginning of 1851 Jowett passed at Oxford for being an 'infidel.'[5] His views must by that time have been indistinguishable from James Martineau's.

In 1855 the result of his studies was given to the world. It took the form of an edition of St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians, Galatians, and Romans, with critical notes and dissertations. These last were the significant part. One of them dealt with the docrine of the Atonement, at that time a burning question in theology. We have seen what was the attitude of

[1] 'The Dialogues of Plato,' Vol. IV., pp. 422–4.
[2] 'Life,' Vol. I., p. 157. [3] *Op. cit.*, p. 162. [4] P. 166.
[5] 'Letters of T. E. Brown,' Vol. I., p. 57.

Maurice and Robertson on this cardinal point. On the negative side Jowett agrees with them and with the Unitarians. In other words, he is dead against the popular interpretation, at that time held with vehemence by High and Low Church alike, as well as by the great body of Dissenters. But his criticism came with far greater weight than theirs, because it was urged with all the authority of a high academic position at what outsiders looked on as the headquarters of orthodoxy; because, in proportion to the constructive element, it occupied a much larger space than with them; and because it was put forth with a rhetorical passion remarkably contrasted with the peaceful flow of rippling sentences, each reflecting some momentary yet distinct light, which marks the ordinary tenour of his style.

The theory of original sin is first of all assailed with questions which answer themselves. 'Can God see us as other than we really are? Can he impute to us what we never did? Would he have punished us for what was not our own fault? An appeal to our ignorance of the Divine nature is irrelevant. No difference between God and man can be a reason for regarding God as less just or less true than the being whom he has made. He is only incomprehensible to us because He is infinitely more so.'[1] Nor does the atrocity of the popular view end here. Let us recall the amount of the penalty consequent on an act for which we were not responsible. 'Mankind . . . are not only sinners but guilty before God. . . . Their present life is one continued sin; their future life is one awful punishment. . . . Free to choose at first, they chose death, and God does but leave them to the natural consequence.' 'Were we to stop here,' Jowett exclaims, 'every honest and true heart would break in upon these sophistries and dash to pieces the pretended freedom and the imputed sin of mankind, as well as the pretended justification of the Divine attributes, in the statement that man necessarily or naturally brought everlasting punishment on himself. No slave's mind was ever reduced so low as to justify the most disproportionate severity inflicted on himself; neither has God so made his creatures that they will lie down and die, even beneath the hand of Him who gave them life.'[2]

But we do not stop here. The doctrine of the Atonement

[1] 'St. Paul's Epistles,' Vol. II., pp. 468–9 (first ed.).

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 471.

comes to the rescue—only, however, to vindicate one outrage on reason by another. An innocent victim is interposed to bear the penalty of uncommitted sin. Christ dies on the Cross to save mankind. In what way? 'Was it that God was angry, and needed to be propitiated like some heathen deity of old? Such a thought refutes itself by the very indignation which it calls up in the human bosom.'[1] Or did the sight of the suffering Christ change wrath into pity? 'Human feelings again revolt at the idea of attributing to the God in whom we live and move and have our being, the momentary clemency of a tyrant.'[2] Or did some mysterious necessity stand in the way of free forgiveness? This would be like setting a heathenish fate above God, and admitting, what is impossible, that he can do or tolerate what is immoral.[3]

One more subterfuge remains. It has been suggested that the crucifixion had for its object not the gratification of God's vengeance but a dramatic exhibition meant to impress on men and angels that where there is sin there must be proportionate suffering. But if so, 'to what a wonderful straitness do we reduce Divine power, which can only show forth its justice by allowing men to commit in itself the greatest of human crimes, that redeems the sin of Adam by the murder of Christ!'[4]

Under these terrible blows the helmet of salvation lies cloven in twain. On the one side is the traditional religious belief, on the other the law of justice. But, like other theologians, Jowett follows the example of Don Quixote, and proceeds to patch it up with pasteboard and wire. The first Christians, he tells us, were deeply impressed by their Master's death, and strove to explain it by metaphors drawn from their immediate religious experience, above all from the sacrifices and ceremonies of Judaism. Much that has become offensive to us was not so to them. But we are not tied to a literal interpretation of language which the progress of civilisation has made obsolete. Among the many expressions used by St. Paul we may pick out what seems best suited for our own edification. He says that the believer is one with Christ, not in his death only but in every act of his existence. Of course this involves making Him an example, but it includes very much more, 'the

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 472.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] P. 473.

indwelling of Christ in our hearts, the conscious recognition that He is the will and the power within us to do rightly.'[1]

Jowett seems to see that the peculiar emphasis laid on Christ's death in the early Christian documents is not accounted for by this inward communion with the believer. And so, like his opponents, he ends by taking refuge in mystery. Without naming Coleridge, he agrees with him in saying that 'we know nothing about the objective act on God's part, by which He reconciled the world to Himself . . . and we seem to know that we can never know anything.'[2] The helmet of salvation has become a cap of darkness.

In making this reservation, Jowett seems to forget that the doctrine of the Atonement has for its correlative and presupposition the doctrine of original or imputed sin which he rejects *in toto*, not in this Essay but in a previous one, entirely devoted to the subject. It is there denounced as being 'at variance with our first notions of the moral nature of God.'[3] That St. Paul taught it is not denied. But his argument is described as a condescension to 'the received opinions of his time,'[4] not to be taken literally by us. What the Apostle really means is to proclaim the unity of all mankind, together with something conveniently described as 'more than language can express.'[5] Obviously there is not a religious belief in the world, Christian or otherwise, that might not be either preserved or dissolved by the same process. It was 'a received opinion of the time' that good men could occasionally work miracles, that gods became incarnate in human form, that the soul, or a part of it, was distinct from the body and survived it. And on Jowett's principles, such beliefs gain no additional authority by being taken for granted in every line of the New Testament.

Another Essay,[6] unfortunately too short, assumes the largest liberty to interpret Scripture 'in the light of those principles, whether of criticism or of morality, which in our age we cannot but feel and know.' And in justification of this method it is urged that the Apostles proceeded no otherwise when they read their own beliefs about Christ into every part of the Old Testament, without troubling themselves about what its authors

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 480.
[2] P. 482.
[3] P. 167.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Pp. 142–4.

really meant;—the implication of course being that the Christology of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms is purely fanciful.

In Germany, the land of their birth, such dissolving views of religious authority generally ended, when they had not begun, with the denial of a personal God. Among the English revolutionists of 1850 some had already gone this length, Matthew Arnold among the number. Jowett too let his thoughts play freely round this momentous problem. The results are provisionally embodied in an essay on Natural Religion, appended to the commentary on Romans. It indicates perhaps a still surviving faith in theism on the writer's part; but the reflexions seem such as would be apter to breed doubts than certainties in other minds.

The idea of evolution, though never named, is everywhere present to Jowett's thoughts. Indeed, as regards the sciences of human nature, it must have been familiar to one who was a student not only of Hegel, but also of Comte. In this respect he was far ahead of the public opinion of his time. The extreme pains taken to dissipate the notion of a primaeval revelation, of which the heathen religions were so many corrupt traditions, show how much the educated classes in England still had to unlearn, how great had been the retrogression since Hume first clearly set forth the true view. The false view was indeed at that very moment finding an ingenious exponent in Gladstone, who employed it to elucidate the theology of Homer; and Max Müller, though a little less deluded, could still talk in a superior style about Rousseau's dream of an original savage state, which he supposed was refuted by the Rig Veda.

Theirs was the surviving spirit of romanticism. Jowett, on the other hand, had not studied the history of Greek philosophy for nothing; and it is refreshing to hear him say that 'in the age of Plato or Cicero mankind had far truer notions of the Divine Being than at any previous period of human history.'[1] But we have to ask whether those most refined notions now generally accepted by the mass of civilised mankind as obviously true, do actually rest on a solid basis of reason. According to Jowett, they do not. The popular argument from design finds

[1] 'St. Paul's Epistles,' Vol. II., p. 402.

no favour in his eyes. Paley's analogy of the watch breaks down under examination. Plants and animals are not manufactured articles; they are growths. The watch has been put together for an evident purpose; they have no end outside themselves. And then living organisms are exceptional phenomena; by concentrating attention on their structure we withdraw it from vast regions of nature where no design appears. Finally, we cannot think of God as working under the limitations of a human artist; and so there is no reasoning from the one to the other.

In the search of a basis for theism, we pass from final to first causes; or, if such long words may be excused, from the teleological to the cosmological argument. Jowett puts it in this way: 'All things that we see are the results or effects of causes, and these again the effects of other causes, and so on through an immense series. But somewhere or other this series must have a stop or limit; we cannot go back from cause to cause without end. Otherwise the series will have no basis on which to rest. Therefore there must be a first cause, that is God.'[1] But until it has been shown that we can pass from the notion of a first cause to that of an intelligent Creator this argument is of no avail. Analogy does not justify us in passing from matter to mind.

Last comes the ontological proof, expressed by saying, 'we have an idea of God, there must be something to correspond to our idea.' But when we question the assumed necessity, 'the whole argument vanishes at once, as the chimera of a metaphysical age.'[2] 'Of no other human conception can it be said that it involves existence;' and 'only a philosophy that puts words for things'[3] can tolerate such nonsense.

Readers versed in the history of philosophy will easily gather from the foregoing analysis that Jowett's destructive criticism on the common arguments for theism is adapted from Kant. But the argument by which they are finally replaced is one that would hardly have commended itself to the analyst of pure reason. There are, it seems, 'two witnesses of the being of God; the order of nature in the world, and the progress of the mind of man.'[4] Yet the essayist must have known that

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 408.
[2] Pp. 409–10.
[3] P. 410.
[4] P. 414.

there were powerful intellects to whom the witnesses bore an opposite testimony. Hegel had shown that, starting with the mere blank form of being, what is must necessarily be thought of as organising itself into such an order and such a progress. Auguste Comte had interpreted order and progress as bound to supersede the belief in God. And the greatest of English systematic thinkers was even then working out a scheme which, taking up both order and progress into the higher idea of evolution, was to substitute this for the idea of creative intelligence.

It is remarkable that precisely the same reason for accepting theism as a philosophical belief—so far at least as the argument from the order of nature goes—should have been put forward at the same time by an older Oxford contemporary of Jowett's, like him also a clergyman, the Rev. Baden Powell, Savilian Professor of Geometry in the university. This eminent and courageous thinker, no less a hero in speculation than his illustrious son, the defender of Mafeking, has shown himself in arms, represented the Broad Church in relation to physical science as Jowett represented the same school in relation to New Testament criticism, but with more consistency, candour, and power. In the thirties he had been a prominent foe of Tractarianism, and had fought it with such ability as to draw a distinguished compliment from Newman. After a long interval, devoted to scientific and educational work, he again entered the field of theological discussion, this time as the representative of views which even now would be thought advanced. In the controversy provoked by the 'Vestiges' he took the transformist side, while as yet in the scientific world it had no advocate but Herbert Spencer.

Himself a mathematician, Baden Powell had reached his conclusions by deductive reasoning. While holding with Mill that all knowledge comes from experience, he agrees with Mill also that there are inductions based on an experience so wide as to make their derivative applications binding on our belief, apart from direct comparison with the facts. Induction itself 'involves the conviction of the universal and permanent uniformity of nature. But this, so far from being an intuitive principle, is only recognised by philosophers, and its acceptance

depends on the extent and profoundness of their inductive studies.'[1]

Baden Powell, however, differs from Mill in the absoluteness with which he lays down the principle of uniformity. It must be understood as prevailing through all space and time. 'There is no period, however remote, at which we can legitimately imagine the chain of physical causation to be broken, and to give place to disconnected influences of a wholly different kind.'[2] Hence in geology there can be no question of comparing the catastrophic theory with the uniformitarian theory, and balancing their respective claims, as though they were equally consistent with the logic of science. In reality the theory of uniformity asserts the validity of induction, while the theory of catastrophes denies it.[3]

Let us see how this principle applies to the question of the origin of species. It is a fact, proved by geological evidence, that at certain periods in the earth's history new species have come into existence. The problem is to account for their appearance. To say that each species has been separately created is an inadmissible hypothesis, ruled out of court as inconsistent with the law of universal causation. We are shut up to the alternative of believing that new species originated either from pre-existing organic forms or from their inorganic elements.[4] For the latter theory there is no evidence whatever. For the former, which is the transmutationist theory, there is at least this to be said, that slight variations do occur, accompanying corresponding changes of condition; and we may reasonably infer that the laws governing these are sufficient, when acting through periods of incalculable length, to account for the origination of new species.

There is nothing opposed to a true philosophy of induction in such an inference. The transmutation of species is said to be an arbitrary hypothesis, opposed to all experience. But the expression involves a fallacy. We have no right to demand experience where experience is impossible. This may be illustrated by a parallel case. No one doubts that coal has been formed out of vegetable matter by natural causes, acting through vast periods of time. Yet the process itself has never been

[1] Baden Powell's 'Unity of Worlds,' p. 100.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 54. [3] P. 58. [4] P. 407.

witnessed by any human eye; nor from the nature of the case could it have been witnessed. And it is just the same with the origin of species. Our appeal is from a narrower to a wider experience—the experience of unbroken physical causation. Where a certain explanation is possible, and all other explanations impossible, we are entitled to assume the truth of that one. In the language of a later philosopher, what may be and what must be, *is*.[1] The theory of the 'Vestiges' may be open to criticism in its minute details; but Baden Powell does not conceal to what an extent he concurs with its broad philosophical principles.[2]

Transmutationism leaves the origin of life itself unexplained. But while the production of every living species out of its inorganic elements seems an improbable and unnecessary hypothesis, the lowest living forms may very well have been evolved from inorganic matter. We do not yet know how this happened, but we may expect to know some day. Meanwhile it cannot be doubted 'that there exists as complete and continuous a connexion of *some kind* between the manifestations of life and the simplest mechanical or chemical laws evinced in the varied actions of the body in which it resides as there is between the action of any machine and the laws of motion and equilibrium . . . and that this connexion and dependence is but one component portion of the vast chain of physical causation whose essential strength lies in its universal continuity.'[3] Already it has been shown that the principle of the correlation of forces (conservation of energy) obtains in vital phenomena, and it is being extended to mental automatisms. How all this bears on man's claim to freewill and an immortal soul is a question for the present put aside. Theism, on the other hand, is supposed to be conclusively established by the fact that nature is orderly and uniform; the universality of order in time and space being the manifestation of the universality and eternity of the supreme mind whose thoughts are nature's laws.

Such a view is very suggestive of pantheism. But from pantheism Baden Powell recoiled with real or affected horror. It is 'utterly preposterous,' and 'involves moral contradictions of the grossest kind.' It asserts the identity of physical action with its moral cause, whereas 'the essential difference and

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 415 ff. [2] P. 424. [3] P. 67.

contrast between them is the very point' which his 'whole argument upholds and enforces.'[1] Yet on the very next page 'the order of physical causes' figures as the 'essential external manifestation' of 'the Supreme Moral Cause.' Nothing could better illustrate the embarrassment of a clerical philosopher than this essential difference and contrast which contrives to be at the same time an essential manifestation.

It had been objected, absurdly enough, to the theory of organic evolution that it did away with the argument from final causes—a naïve confession that if evidence for theism did not exist it must be manufactured. Baden Powell, however, boldly offers evolution itself as an evidence of design. The nebular hypothesis, the changes which have taken place in our globe since its first formation, and the development of plants and animals, all bear witness to a supreme Reason.[2] The question between the evolutionists and their opponents is 'whether we suppose the Creator to construct a machine which, once adjusted, shall go on fulfilling its work, or one which at successive periods shall require repeated manual interposition.' But this is to admit that the chain of physical causation had a beginning in time—an assumption directly opposed to the author's earlier statement on the subject, already quoted.

In his next work, 'Christianity without Judaism,' written as a sequel to the 'Unity of Worlds,' Baden Powell comes into more direct conflict with the debased Evangelicism which at that time chiefly represented orthodoxy in England. This religion, in spite of its name, had very little to do with the Gospel, and drew its spiritual nutriment largely from the Old Testament, which, like the early Tractarians, is regarded as an infallible guide for modern life. The Priestly Code of Judaism in particular provided it with a stringent sanction for the Sabbatarianism which had now more than ever become a distinctive badge of the Low Church party. Now, this superstition was particularly hateful to Baden Powell. Besides the general aversion entertained by all liberal-minded persons towards the English Sunday as then observed, he had particular reasons, as a man of science, for objecting to the way in which its obligations were understood. The belief that 'after twelve

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 167.

[2] Pp. 446–9.

o'clock on Saturday night it was sinful to read off a scale' had, according to Humboldt, 'destroyed the value of an important set of magnetic observations.' And Baden Powell adds, from his own knowledge, that 'extensive tables' were still printed in which every *seventh* entry, instead of degrees, minutes, and seconds, is filled up with the word 'Sunday'! He adds that 'it would be a curious calculation to find the real value of a *mean* deduced from such a column!'[1]

How great a nuisance this Sabbatism, as he calls it, had become, and how complete was the ascendency of its Evangelical champions, is shown by the professor's energetic protest. His old enemies of the High Church party had apparently sunk into insignificance and harmlessness. He refers to the vehement alarm excited some years before by 'their attempts to revive some points of ecclesiastical ceremonial,' as contrasting strangely with the indifference of public opinion to 'the far greater practical enormities of . . . puritanical intolerance, concentrated in the enforcement of Sabbatism.'[2] The gentle remonstrances of F. W. Robertson had apparently produced no effect. He had appealed to the authority of St. Paul as abrogating the old law, which, however, remained binding on those who had not yet risen to the pure spiritualism of the Gospel. The representative of the new Broad Church party takes higher ground. Nothing in the Mosaic law was ever binding, as such, on the Gentile conscience, and therefore nothing needs to be abrogated.

Naturally the belief in Old Testament infallibility is also discarded; or rather the essayist assumes that after the writings of Coleridge, Arnold, and others, but more especially after the discoveries of geology, it needs no disproof. He is quite aware of the attempts made by apologists to reconcile those discoveries with the Biblical narrative, but he rejects them with contempt. Formerly, indeed, the unwary reader was misled 'by an artful contexture of plausible misrepresentations into the persuasion that no real contradiction exists. But no such fallacies can hold their ground in the face of the better information now so universally disseminated.'[3] The proposed interpretations 'are of a kind violating the plainest rules of common sense: they proceed by such a latitude of philology, and sanction such a

[1] 'Unity of Worlds,' p. 472.

[2] 'Christianity without Judaism,' p. 21.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

total vagueness in the use of words, as, if only applied generally, would readily enable us to explain away any given statement in the Bible or in any other book.'[1]

Such is the ingenuous confidence of this Oxford professor in the power of truth that he characterises the overthrow of the Mosaic cosmogony as 'a substantial position gained and retained, from which the advancing enquirer cannot be dislodged . . . the commencement of a great revolution in theological views.'[2]

It would of course be possible to take much broader ground. 'In the opinion of some acute critics,' the Old Testament narrative, 'so far from being a continuous historical account of the Israelites and their institutions,' is 'a compilation of fragmentary documents of various ages, put together without much regard to their historical connexion or authenticity, but with a religious design.'[3] By adopting their conclusions, the liberation of Christianity from Judaism would be much more summarily effected; but the essayist deems it more advisable, in addressing the general reader, to assert no more than is generally admitted.[4]

'Christianity without Judaism' helps us to understand the aggressive tone of English rationalism in the fifties. With our national character, the love of truth for its own sake is unhappily a passion not strong enough to justify the destruction of error where error is entwined with the interests and affections even of a minority, at least when that minority happens to be united and unscrupulous. But fortunately for the interests of reason, false religious beliefs are apt to connect themselves with practical abuses. In this instance the abuse was Sabbatarianism, not perhaps in itself an evil of the first magnitude, but still one well fitted to arouse general hostility from the irritating frequency and ubiquitousness of the privations involved, as well as from the provoking airs of superiority to the rest of the community assumed by its supporters. And if the whole result of modern criticism and modern science might seem a disproportionately heavy park of artillery to direct against the petty restrictions of the English Sunday, we must bear in mind that the overthrow of a great Minister would not have been thought too high a price to pay for their maintenance by the puritan leaders.

At the time of which I am writing the champions of

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 63. [2] *Ibid.* [3] P. 97. [4] P. 98.

orthodoxy had, as a rule, but one reply to their opponents, whether Broad Church, Unitarian, or theistic. They contended that scepticism, once admitted within the stronghold of faith, would ultimately lead to its complete destruction. And certainly Baden Powell's next work, 'The Order of Nature,' was of a kind to justify their prognostication. Nothing so revolutionary had as yet been published by a clergyman; and even now not many of the clergy would be found openly professing such opinions, although many hold them in private, and occasionally insinuate them in their books and sermons. The writer's object is to reconsider the whole question of religious belief in its relation to physical science, and more especially to examine the claims of miracles on our credence. First comes a rapid sketch of the progress of physical science from the earliest times to his own day, chiefly as exhibited by the advances made in astronomy, geology, and natural history, studied in its bearing on theology. We know already what the conclusion will be. Natural philosophy proves the existence of an immutable order in the material universe, and thereby places the truth of theism on an irrefragable basis.

At this point considerations of another kind intervene. If the order of nature proves the existence of God, interruptions to that order would tend, so far as they went, to prove the contrary, to shake our belief in a Supreme Mind. But miracles are such interruptions—or at least until lately have been regarded as such. At the same time much stress has been laid on their evidential value. The truth of Christianity is often said to have been attested by the miracles recorded in the New Testament. But with the advance of physical science there has been a noticeable tendency on the part of theologians to recede from this position. Miracles are now defended not as suspensions of natural law, but as exemplifications of a higher law exerting itself in accordance with some predetermined scheme at a particular moment in history. According to this theory, miracles are not the foundation of religious belief, but are themselves an object of faith, a mystery like another, not a reason why mysteries should be accepted.

As a mathematician accustomed to deal with definite conceptions, Baden Powell was not to be put off with vague phrases about higher law. To him the order of nature meant an

unbroken chain of physical causation, not interrupted even for the purpose of bringing the human species into the world. And in his last volume of essays he seems prepared to welcome what we call the conservation of energy, or as it was then called, the correlation of the physical forces, as the ultimate formula of causation. Now if, as he says, all varieties of physical agency are but disguises for the 'same primary and unalterable amount of mechanical energy,'[1] events involving a creation or destruction of energy cannot occur. And that miracles are such events no careful thinker can doubt.

If a clergyman may now openly express his disbelief in miracles, and yet remain in the Church, he owes that liberty very largely to Baden Powell. But the liberator himself had to wrap up his meaning in various more or less transparent disguises. One of his artifices is to pass in review the various rationalistic attempts to explain away the Gospel miracles, pointing out the insufficiency of each, but at the same time conceding so much as to leave an impression that by combining what is best in Strauss, Ewald, and the rest a fairly satisfactory interpretation of the life of Christ might be made out, in which no place would be left for supernatural occurrences. And whatever becomes of the facts, the comforting assurance remains that 'the miraculous narratives of the Gospel may be received for the divine instruction they were designed to convey without prejudice to the invariable laws of physiology, of gravitation, or of the constitution of matter.'[2]

Finally, it is shown by copious quotations from the Tractarian writers that there is at least as good evidence for the ecclesiastical as for the Gospel miracles. Newman and his school had argued from the credibility of the one to the credibility of the other. Their reasoning is now reversed, and the untrustworthiness of the Evangelists is inferred from the untrustworthiness of the Fathers.

The successive manifestoes of Oxford liberalism called forth angry protests from conservative Churchmen, and applauding notices from more advanced freethinkers; but outside clerical or anti-clerical circles they seem to have excited little, if any, attention. A series of great military and political events

[1] 'The Order of Nature,' p. 202.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 377.

abroad, accompanied by industrial crises and terrible crimes at home, left the mass of the English people little interest to spare for theological disputes; while readers of a more thoughtful cast found themselves fully occupied on the one hand by the splendid stream of literary production kept up almost without intermission from the early forties by the great historians, essayists, novelists, and poets of the age, and on the other by the new philosophic and scientific movement to which England, under French and German stimulus, had at last given birth. In strict chronological propriety this latter phenomenon would already have presented itself for discussion, dating back as it does to the early fifties, but for clearness' sake it has been reserved for a future chapter.

This indifference of the lay public to theological controversy had a mischievous effect on the methods by which conservative apologists defended their cause. It will be remembered that Clough, in the terrible poem where he makes the shade of Christ himself rise up in judgment against his followers, brings on the scene certain Anglican dignitaries, loth to abandon their preferments, who try to silence the apparition by telling him that Christianity had been

> 'proved by Butler in one way,
> By Paley better in a later day.'

Paley's way was, in fact, the reasonable straightforward course of showing, or trying to show, that natural and revealed religion rested on a satisfactory basis of scientific and historical evidence; and he chose this course because, writing during the French Revolution, when the people at large had become profoundly interested in the truth or falsity of religious belief, and disposed to bring all its statements up for examination before the bar of common sense, no other appeal would have been tolerated. But the evidentiary method involves more trouble than an indifferent public, or a public absorbed in other studies, will readily submit to. Accordingly, Butler's way once more came into fashion, or rather a debased version of his analogical method, in which exclusive emphasis was laid on the inconsistency of retaining any form of religion when the authoritative tradition of the community had been rejected in any particular. He who doubted one Biblical miracle was invited to deny all. If he

accepted the consequence, he was asked how he could defend the creation. If he surrendered that also, he was expected to declare himself an atheist. If he took this last step, there was no valid reason for not becoming a debauchee and a swindler. Strangely enough the orthodox Protestant controversialists failed to see that they were playing into the hands of Roman Catholic logicians; while the Roman Catholics failed to see that they in turn ought to seek for salvation in the decisions of the Sanhedrin. A half-century's experience has shown that extreme rationalism has come out as the chief winner from this game of consequences.

From the whole mass of apologetic literature in which it was attempted to crush the new movement by an application of Butler's supposed method one name alone survives. Mansel is still remembered, although no one now reads his once famous Bampton Lectures on the 'Limits of Religious Thought.' He was a strong Oxford Tory, bitterly opposed to University reform, because it seemed to him a violation of the rights of property, and also because he feared—as the event proved, not altogether without reason—that to throw open close fellowships and scholarships, and to endow new professorships with a part of the funds bequeathed for their support, would somehow encourage the study of Hegel at Oxford. Hegel, Schelling, and the German pantheists generally were, in fact, his chief aversion. Perhaps he over-estimated the connexion between their philosophy and the redistribution of corporate property.

Mansel was a disciple of Sir William Hamilton, and through Hamilton to some extent of Kant also, with whom, as well as with modern German thought in general, he was more accurately acquainted than his master had been. Both partly anticipated the neo-Kantian movement which followed the break-up of Hegelianism in modern Germany. It is a curious instance of the close connexion between Scotland and France that Hamilton should have been first roused to critical activity less by Schelling's speculations, fragments of which Coleridge was retailing at Highgate, than by an adaptation of Schelling with which a brilliant French charlatan was regaling crowded and fashionable audiences in the lecture-rooms of the Sorbonne. To the spurious pantheism of Victor Cousin Hamilton opposed an argument, not

much more genuine, put together from shreds and patches of Kant's 'Critique.' Kant had restricted all knowledge to experience, and experience itself to the objects and occurrences contained in space and time. The raw material of knowledge given through sense is first presented to the outward and inward eye as two indefinite masses, the one composed of coexistent, the other of successive parts. Then comes the understanding, and reduces this shifting chaos to order by the application of such categories as number, causation, and mutual dependence. But the unity and regularity which meet us everywhere in nature are not really given by experience; they are imposed on experience by our intelligence; and what seems certainly true is so only because we have made it true to begin with. There may be a reality existing independently of all appearance: indeed the very notion of appearance seems to imply something that appears. But if there be such a transcendent reality we know and can know nothing about it—except indeed the negative fact that it neither exists in space nor in time. Our acquaintance with the properties of these two forms is so absolute, our intimacy so complete, that we cannot explain them except as part of ourselves, as spontaneous, albeit unconscious energies of mind.

Holding these views, Kant looked on the failure of all speculative theology and metaphysics as a convincing verification of their soundness. Try to conceive a world existing in space and time, independent of our thoughts, and reason finds itself entangled in hopeless contradictions. Is matter infinitely divisible or composed of atoms? Is its existence necessary or contingent, eternal or due to a First Cause? Equally strong arguments are forthcoming for either alternative; and the one set are as futile as the other.

Hamilton had neither the courage nor the logical consecutiveness to adopt Kant's criticism as a whole. He never even fairly faced the problem of space and time, how they exist or what they mean. On the whole he seems to have agreed with Reid that we know things as they are, but only within certain narrow limits. But Kant's antithetic distinction between subject and object took a strong hold on him, and seemed to clear up much that was before obscure in the history of speculation. Especially it could be turned with effect against Cousin's metaphysics, which seemed to involve the identification of

subject and object in the consciousness of the Absolute, and therefore the annihilation of all thought. As against such pretensions, Hamilton insisted on what he called the relativity of all knowledge. To think, he said, is to condition. And the first condition of all is the distinction between the thinking subject and the object thought of. But this is not all. Every single object of consciousness is known only as related to other objects, as connected with, opposed to, and limited by them. Hence there can be no knowledge of the infinite any more than of the absolute, being, as it is, the negation of a limit. Space without a bound and time without a beginning are alike inconceivable; but neither can they be conceived as finite. We can only say that of the two inconceivable alternatives one must be true.

In this way Hamilton vindicates, to his own satisfaction, a province for belief as distinguished from knowledge. For since, in all speculation where the element of infinity comes in, we are driven by the logic of alternatives to admit the necessity of something that we cannot understand, the principle may receive a wider extension; and theology as well as philosophy is justified in an appeal to faith on behalf of mysteries which reason cannot comprehend.

Hamilton knew very little about Hegel; nor probably would he have been able to appreciate the peculiar method by which his difficulties are overcome in Hegel's 'Logic.' But the rising popularity of Hegelian studies at Oxford provoked Mansel, and induced him to encounter the new pantheism with the same weapons that had seemed so successful in Hamilton's controversy with Cousin and Schelling. Hegel had ostentatiously repudiated the first principles of the old logic; so this outrage on common sense was duly quoted as a warning example of the shifts to which heterodox philosophy might be driven. And as Strauss had originally belonged to the Hegelian school, his criticism of the Gospel history, although entirely based on the common logic, seemed to come in for some of the ridicule incurred by their rejection of it. At the same time Hegel was a useful bugbear to shake in the faces of those who, like Francis Newman, continued to believe in a personal God after they had ceased to believe in Christianity.

So much being premised, we may now proceed to an

examination of Mansel's Bampton Lectures on the Limits of Religious Thought, delivered and published in 1858. The book is avowedly based on Hamilton's Philosophy of the Conditioned, applied to theology according to the method of Butler's Analogy. It has for one of its mottoes Hamilton's saying, 'no difficulty emerges in theology which had not previously emerged in philosophy.' The lecturer goes through the fundamental conceptions of what he calls Rational Theology, and shows that they are self-destructive, that is to say, we can neither understand how this world can be the work of an infinite and absolute Being, nor how the world can itself constitute such a Being. That which is infinite includes in itself the sum of all existence, and therefore cannot become the cause of something distinct from itself. Neither can such a Being be conscious, for its perfect unity excludes the duality implied by personal intelligence. If, renouncing the belief in a personal God, we take refuge in pantheism, we find ourselves unable to explain how the multiplicity revealed in experience can have been evolved from a primordial unity. If the diversity be only apparent, we have still to explain how such a delusion originated, and what right we have to reason at all when our individuality is merged in the All-One. There remains the alternative of atheism; but this also is untenable. For 'while it is impossible to represent in thought any object, except as finite, it is equally impossible to represent any finite object, or any aggregate of finite objects, as exhausting the universe of being.' [1]

It must be admitted that, of the three arguments, that against theism is incomparably the strongest, and indeed the only one deserving the name. Yet even this loses much of its point as against a religious believer who refuses to let himself be bound by Mansel's definitions and axioms in framing the conception of a God. A personality spiritually akin to man, but vastly exceeding him in power, wisdom, and goodness, can assuredly be thought of without a logical contradiction. Of course the actual existence of such a Being cannot be inferred from any amount of meditation on the nature of being in itself; but such a warning was hardly needed after Kant's criticism, least of all in England, where abstract demonstrations had never been in favour. Whether the existence of such a God

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

can be inferred from the facts of experience is another question, and one with which Mansel never cared to grapple. But his dialectic has the merit of suggesting difficulties ignored by the popular arguments from nature to an intelligent first cause. We are reminded of the very narrow limitations under which intelligence and will, as known by experience, are found to exist, and of their strict dependence on material conditions. The more we abstract from those limitations and conditions, the more difficult of conception does consciousness become; and with their disappearance it tends to vanish altogether.

The case against pantheism is considerably weaker, and only gains a certain plausibility from the audacious assumption by which it is identified with Alexandrian Platonism. According to that philosophy, the Absolute dwindles into a mere abstract unity whence even being is excluded, for if the One existed it would no longer be one but two. Modern pantheism, on the contrary, conceives the world as a concrete whole, constituted by an organic principle; possessing through that principle the qualities of life without the implication of an environment, the necessity of nutriment, or the fatalities of decay and dissolution; possessing also the qualities of mind in an unconscious form, until it becomes conscious of itself in the personality of man. Whether nature does actually form such an organic whole is a question for experience to answer. The notion is, at any rate, not self-contradictory; nor has Mansel finally disposed of it.

As to the case against atheism, it is so inept as rather to reinforce than to counterbalance the refutation of rational theology. 'Atheism involves,' we are told, 'the self-contradictory assumption of a limited Universe.' Now, in the first place, such an assumption is not self-contradictory; for a finite world might exist in infinite space, nor is the infinity of space itself axiomatic; and, in the second place, whether the universe be finite or infinite, it is logically possible, on either alternative, to be an atheist, that is to deny the existence both of a personal God and of an impersonal organic unity of things. Mansel, it is true, calls atheism a denial of the Infinite (with a capital I), but this is a scandalous abuse of words. Whether, apart from space and time, infinity has any meaning may well be doubted; and, at any rate, only in reference to space and time is there

any shadow of a pretence for maintaining that its denial involves a contradiction. A material universe containing no more than a quintillion of atoms would certainly be both limited and conceivable. Of course we could not tell how it came to be exactly that size. But there would be no sense in submitting it to the alternative of being either limited by something beyond itself, or containing the limit in itself, and therefore being both limiting and limited. To insist on the dilemma would be to confound quantity of matter with blank extension.

Even admitting pantheism and atheism to be what they are not, self-contradictory, the denial of theism still leaves open another alternative, since become famous under the name of agnosticism. Agnostics simply take Hamilton and Mansel at their word, as regards the incapacity of human reason to deal with problems involving conceptions of absoluteness and infinity. They refuse to speculate at all about the origin, extent, duration, or destiny of the world. In the words of Leslie Stephen, they hold that there are limits to the sphere of human intelligence, and that theology lies outside those limits.[1] Mansel saw the possibility of such abstinence, and by another scandalous abuse of terms denounced it as Pyrrhonism, which he calls 'the suicide of Reason itself.'[2] He ought to have known, and in fact he did know, that Pyrrhonism means denying that we can know anything; which, besides being the suicide of reason, is likely to lead to suicide in the literal sense as well. It is true that, with more candour than prudence, he supplies the corrective to his own misstatements by explaining that 'the contradictions in Rational Theology (including atheism) belong not to the use of reason, but only to its exercise on one particular object of thought;'[3]—that object being the Absolute and Infinite. So says the agnostic also. And he finds himself confirmed in his prudent resolution to abstain from speculating on such themes when he learns that the Absolute and Infinite are not, properly speaking, objects of thought at all, being in fact unintelligible and unmeaning abstractions.

Rational theology having broken down, irrational theology steps in to save the situation. Although a personal infinite is

[1] 'An Agnostic's Apology,' *sub in.*

[2] 'Limits of Religious Thought,' p. 119.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

inconceivable, it is our duty to believe in it. The method of scepticism, instead of throwing us forward on ophelism, throws us back on mysticism under the form of intuition. Religious intuition has two principal modes, the feeling of dependence, and the conviction of moral obligation. In reference to the former we are told that man learns to pray before he learns to reason.[1] No statement could be more audaciously untrue. Prayer implies reasoning, implies an inference based on experience that certain words and gestures will secure certain desirable objects. Nor does the feeling of dependence necessarily lead to prayer. Great numbers of people observe that their arrangements depend for success on the weather, the tide, their own or their friends' health, and fifty other circumstances, without asking or wishing the course of nature to be altered for their benefit. Prayer, in the religious sense, implies belief, not in the least intuitive but reasoned out, whether correctly or otherwise is not the question, that there is a conscious Being behind phenomena able and willing to alter them at our request. In fact, it implies the belief in superhuman causation.

So also with the other mode of intuition to which Mansel appeals, the conviction of moral obligation. The obligation is first experienced, and then referred for its source to a superhuman cause in the will of God. To call this inference intuitive was a survival of Newman's teaching[2] not likely to carry any weight with a whole generation of Oxford men brought up at the feet of Mill and Comte. It was a fresh instance of the lecturer's marvellous audacity, to set at naught all the accumulated results of psychology and anthropology, by putting forward as self-evident this mystical derivation of conscience. And assuming moral apriorism as proved, it involved an equally insolent disregard of Kant's teaching to infer, as Mansel does, without ceremony, the existence of a superhuman lawgiver from the confession of a moral law. The Bible itself excludes such a derivation when its prophets plead with Iahveh in the name of a covenant which is recognised as binding, and equally binding, on him and his people.

Anyhow, this mode of religious consciousness, like the

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 68.

[2] Or rather, as Mansel's acquaintance with Newman's writings was very slight, of the traditional teaching received unquestioningly by both.

feeling of dependence, involves the notion of a cause. Neither of them is a consciousness of the Infinite. 'Yet the Infinite is recognised by the religious consciousness, though not apprehended as such; for the consciousness of limitation carries with it an indirect conviction of the existence of the Infinite beyond consciousness.'[1] Passing over the illegitimacy of this assertion, we have to remember that elsewhere the Infinite is described as 'a feeble and negative impotence of thought,' to identify God with which would be to dishonour him, 'a barren, vague, meaningless abstraction';[2] and again as 'a pretentious perversion of the finite.'[3]

Such self-contradictions as those I have set forth might lead us to look on Mansel as a rather puzzle-headed sort of apologist for religion. That, however, would be a mistake. It was not so much that his own mind was in a confused state as that he was trying to bewilder the minds of others, and under cover of the confusion thus created to rescue those religious beliefs which had suffered most severely from the combined assaults of theists, Unitarians, and Broad Church theologians, kept up without intermission during the previous ten years. In the then state of opinion it would have been impossible to maintain that the distinctions of right and wrong had no existence for God himself, but were merely imposed by him for his own purposes on us. There was no escaping from the argument that a revelation was without authority for men, unless they had been previously convinced that the God from whom it professed to come existed, and could be trusted to speak the truth; while his veracity, again, could only be vouched for as one part of a moral character believed to be perfect in every way; while this conception, in its turn, could only be reached by conceiving his morality to be like ours, although on an immeasurably greater scale. It seemed, therefore, to follow that an alleged revelation could only be accepted subject to the condition of contradicting nothing that is believed to be perfectly just in the dealings between man and man.

This analysis will make it clear how completely the methods of religious thought and the issues of religious controversy had been transformed since Butler wrote. In opposing natural to

[1] Summary of Lecture IV., p. xlviii. [2] P. 57. [3] P. 122.

revealed religion the English deists were opposing a deity whose existence was inferred from an examination of the external world to the theology of Hebrew and Christian tradition. Butler accordingly tried to show that there was, in fact, no such opposition between the God of nature and the God of revelation, but, on the contrary, a remarkably close analogy; and that any argument against the one might be urged with equal relevancy against the other. But such a method of recrimination, though freely employed by Butler's successors against the new school of theism and its allies among the Unitarians and the Broad Church, was soon felt to be inadequate when the appeal to nature was superseded or supplemented by the appeal to conscience, to the evidence of an infinite divine goodness implied by the very constitution of the soul. Moreover, the danger of playing into the hands of extreme rationalism, already evident in Butler's time, had become greatly aggravated by the new developments of French and German philosophy, by the spread of positivism and pantheism over England generally, and even within the cloisters of Oxford itself. At the same time the difficulty of the old apologists, that in undermining natural religion they were endangering revelation to an equal extent while leaving the objections peculiar to it unanswered, recurred with equal force when the intuitions of conscience were called in question. For the guidance of those intuitions was recognised as authoritative by all shades of theists alike, from the school of the elder to the school of the younger Newman.

In this dilemma Mansel had recourse to that bewildering equivocation, that incessant and shameless substitution of one value for another in talking about the Infinite to which I have drawn attention. When his object is to prove the existence of transcendental certainties against agnostics, and the truth of religion against atheists, then infinity stands for a distinctly positive notion. When the divine personality has to be insisted on against the German pantheists, it is compatible with infinite being; when the theism of Francis Newman and Theodore Parker is to be discredited, the two conceptions are mutually exclusive. When external evidence of revelation is wanted, we know enough about the absolute and infinite Being to affirm with confidence that certain occurrences, taken on trust from the reports of others, are due to his direct interference with the

course of nature. When the supposed witnesses of these events make contradictory statements about the divine nature, they are to be believed, because, in our ignorance of the infinite and absolute, the stranger a statement about God, the more likely is it to be true. Having let pass the inconceivable, we may swallow the self-contradictory without a murmur.

According to Mansel, the doctrine of the Trinity, as exhibited in the Athanasian Creed, is not more incredible than the co-existence of unity and plurality in ourselves or in any other object of experience.[1] Thus what, for a Hamiltonian, alone makes thought possible is used to illustrate what excludes the possibility of thought. Similarly the Incarnation is described as no more inconceivable than the coexistence of the Infinite and the Finite.[2] It would be more to the point if an instance could be produced where the two are identified. It is one thing for a divine person to become manifest in the flesh; it is quite another for a complete human being, body and soul, to be made one with a God. To suppose the realisation of such a union is like talking, not of a circle surrounded by infinite space, but of a circle with a measurable radius filling infinite space.

So far from vindicating Catholic theology, Mansel's apologetics bring out with great vividness the evidence of its human origin. That a system should exhibit all and more than all the absurdities and contradictions of metaphysical speculation, goes to prove that it is not revealed, not an illuminating message from the unseen, but a clumsy attempt to reconcile conflicting beliefs, or later with earlier points of view. The Christian 'revelation' was really an accommodation of tribal monotheism to Graeco-Roman conceptions of the hero as an incarnate God.

In point of fact, when Mansel wrote, rationalist critics had ceased to attack the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity, and were only interested in showing how they had come to be believed. And English rationalism in particular was occupying itself much more with the moral than with the metaphysical aspects of Catholic dogma. The lecturer probably knew this; and he began with the speculative side less because of its controversial importance than in order to give a favourable impression of what could be done in defence of orthodoxy by his

[1] 'Limits of Religious Thought,' p. 114. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

jargon about the Absolute and the Infinite. So far he had been merely reproducing and expounding Hamilton's philosophical scepticism, with Hegel instead of Cousin and Schelling for its victim. But his real object throughout had been to employ the same method in defence of what was called the scheme of salvation, but might more appropriately have been called the scheme of damnation; a point on which Hamilton had never touched.

Nothing shows the effectiveness of the attack better than the character of the new defence. Formerly theologians had spoken of inherited guilt, vicarious suffering, and endless torments for the wicked, as self-evidently reasonable and just arrangements, naturally resulting from the constitution of things in themselves—as indeed they still appear to the more ignorant members of the Salvation Army in England, and to Roman Catholic priests in France. Mansel, on the other hand, deprecates criticism on the ground that we know nothing of things in themselves. God, no doubt, is righteous; but our standards of righteousness are not applicable to an infinite Being. Human morality is relative to human conditions, and therefore does not hold of an absolute Being. He fails to see that such a line of argument destroys the moral proof, on which he had laid such stress, of God's existence. Precisely because morality is relative we cannot erect it into a law of the universe, we cannot appeal to conscience as a revelation of eternal truth.

From a sense, perhaps, of its hollowness, Mansel tries to eke out this general plea by some considerations bearing more particularly on the incriminated dogmas. But here he does little more than repeat, as an 'unanswerable argument,' the well-worn fallacies of Butler.[1] Original sin finds its justification in the fact that moral dispositions often descend from father to son, and that 'the child of sinful parents is depraved by evil example;'[2]—a fact which, in human morality, so far from furnishing a ground for condemnation before offences have been committed, is recognised as an extenuating circumstance, or even as a plea for complete exculpation, when the victim of hereditary depravity is put on his trial for an actual offence.

A man who falls over a precipice is crippled or killed; and

[1] 'Limits,' p. 149. [2] P. 148.

so perhaps by natural necessity, argues the author of the 'Analogy,' a moral *faux pas* may land a soul in everlasting torments. Besides, adds Mansel, improving on Butler's cynical instruction, the wicked may go on sinning for ever and ever.[1] One would think that such a hypothesis left open the possibility of their ultimate repentance. But this he does not contemplate. As to the Atonement, no defence whatever is offered for the theory of vicarious suffering, which this High Church divine evidently accepts, beyond a rather irrelevant complaint about the variety of objections brought against it;[2] and a still more irrelevant digression into the reasons why forgiveness should be a virtue in man and not a virtue in God.[3]

Like Butler, Mansel ultimately rests the belief in Christianity on external evidence alone. The character of its Founder and the distinction of his teaching are included in the proof, but only as phenomena which are inexplicable except as the result of divine interference with the ordinary course of nature. But, as was pointed out at the time of its first appearance, the whole argument of the book is such as to cut this one remaining support from under its author's feet. A French terrorist observed that the only duty society owes to kings is identification. That duty cannot be performed for Mansel's God, of whom, at the utmost, we can only tell that he is, not what he is. In our ignorance of things in themselves we cannot affirm that such events as the Virgin-birth or the Resurrection, supposing them to have occurred, were the effects of supernatural causes, still less that they were the effects of an infinite and absolute cause. Indeed, we are even precluded from attributing them to any cause at all. Nor, granting them to be miracles in the full theological sense of the word, does it logically follow that the moral statements made in connexion with those events were a declaration of God's will. Finally, if they are such a declaration, it does not follow that the declaration is true. Like the religious belief founded on authority or on mysticism, the religious belief founded on scepticism falls to pieces at a touch.

Both at Oxford and in the country Mansel gained an immense reputation by his Bampton Lectures. He was hailed

[1] 'Limits,' p. 147. [2] Pp. 138–9. [3] P. 140.

as a second Butler. Even the gyps crowded to St. Mary's to hear him. His book reached a fourth edition the year after its publication, and was read by many who knew as little about philosophy as a gyp could know. But the applause came not unmingled with earnest protests even from the friends of orthodoxy, from such a theologian as Maurice, and from such religious laymen as Professor Goldwin Smith and Richard Hutton. An old don is reported to have expressed his surprise at having lived to hear atheism preached from the pulpit of St. Mary's. In fact, Mr. John Morley tells us that the 'Limits of Religious Thought' helped to shake the fabric of belief in some of the most active minds then at Oxford;[1] and not long afterwards its destructive criticism of rational theology was developed into the dogmatic agnosticism of Herbert Spencer's 'First Principles.' That was its only historical result; for a little later still the whole Philosophy of the Conditioned went to pieces under Mill's attack on Sir William Hamilton; and the dreaded dialectic of Hegel for a time took its place as a logical justification of belief. But even apart from such developments, Mansel's quibbling scholasticism could not long have held its ground amid the storm which was now about to burst over public opinion in England, revolutionising the methods of theological controversy, transforming religious beliefs, and for the first time winning full freedom of speculation and speech not only for the English clergy, but, through them, for the intellectual classes of the community at large, for the Non-conformist ministers, and eventually, to some small extent, even for the Roman priesthood itself.

[1] 'Critical Miscellanies,' Vol. III., p. 242.

NEW COLLEGE LONDON N.W.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DELIVERANCE OF CRITICISM

As the sixth decade of the nineteenth century neared its close the position of the liberal clergy was becoming yearly more unpleasant, if not more untenable. The tactics of their opponents were annoying and even discreditable. An article in the 'Quarterly Review,' entitled 'The Neology of the Cloister,'[1] had for its object to assimilate Jowett and Rowland Williams with the Hegelian and Comtist assailants of Christianity. Mansel pursued the same system in the notes to his Bampton Lectures. Favourable reviews of Jowett's 'St. Paul' were not allowed to appear.[2] When the daring commentator himself was appointed Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, a bigoted clique, using the Vice-Chancellor as their tool, obliged him to sign the Thirty-nine Articles anew. The author of the Essay on the Atonement submitted with a graceful affectation of indifference, but with deep inward resentment at what he considered a degradation.[3] Another and even meaner kind of persecution, was the refusal of Christ Church Chapter to raise the endowment of the Greek chair to a level with that of the other professorships; although funds existed which would have been used for the purpose had the professor's orthodoxy been unsuspected. During ten years Jowett continued to do for forty pounds a year all and more than all the work that should have been rewarded with five hundred; and when at last the Chapter yielded to the demands of his supporters, it was under the pressure of public opinion rather than from a sense of justice.[4]

[1] Attributed, I know not with what truth, to Conybeare.
[2] 'Life of Benjamin Jowett,' Vol. I., pp. 235–6.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 239.
[4] Pp. 241, ff.

In these circumstances young men of ability showed increasing reluctance to enter the ministry. Among the candidates for Holy Orders the number of those who had taken University honours fell off conspicuously, and even the supply of those who had taken a mere ordinary degree showed a considerable diminution.[1] Their place was supplied by literates trained in ecclesiastical colleges where the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible were dogmatically taught. A great writer of the time declared that if a boy showed exceptional stupidity he was either sent into the Army or hidden in the Church.

Thus it came to pass that the Broad Church party felt themselves under the necessity of vindicating their own right to free enquiry, and also of doing something to heal the widening breach between religious belief and the growing intelligence of the country. In pursuance of this double object they resolved to issue a joint manifesto of the new views which had been gathering strength ever since the collapse of the Tractarian movement, or rather which had begun with the importation of German criticism into England after the great war, but had been temporarily denied utterance by Keble and Newman's attempted revival of obsolete sacerdotal claims, and had resumed their course when those claims had been defeated. This collective manifesto took the form of a volume entitled 'Essays and Reviews.'

It has long been the fashion to speak of this celebrated publication as a mediocre performance, which by some incomprehensible misunderstanding created a panic in the Church of England, attained a brief notoriety, and then passed into swift oblivion. In reality its appearance is perhaps the most important single event in the history of the Church of England during the last two hundred years, and certainly the most important in the history of English rationalism during the nineteenth century. In saying so much I am not claiming any novelty for the opinions put forward by the contributors, nor any high intellectual distinction for the manner in which those opinions were expressed. Courage, opportuneness, and sufficient literary skill to get the book read, were the qualities needed, and these were present to the required extent. What the writers wanted was

[1] See the Preface to Part I. of Colenso's work on the Pentateuch.

not to break new ground in speculative theology, but to gain a hearing for an interpretation of religion such as had not previously been put forward by any body of English Churchmen holding their position; and also to gain for themselves and their successors the liberty of carrying on the same method to conclusions still unforeseen. To say that the essayists wanted, like Hurrell Froude and his friends, to 'make a row' would perhaps be using unnecessarily strong language. But it would not be unfair to conjecture that something of the sort passed through the thoughts of the more ardent among their number. Jowett, writing to Arthur Stanley, explains that he and his associates 'do not wish to do anything rash or irritating to the public or the Universities, but are determined not to submit to this abominable system of terrorism, which prevents the statement of the plainest fact, and makes true theology or theological education impossible.'[1]

The manifesto was not planned by Jowett himself, but by an older man, Henry Bristow Wilson, who in his earlier days, as an Oxford tutor, had been a conspicuous opponent of the Romanising Tractarians, had 'exercised the most powerful influence upon the intellect of Oxford,'[2] and as Bampton Lecturer in 1851 had advocated free enquiry in theology. Since 1850 he had held a college living in Huntingdonshire. His, if not the ablest, was the most distinctive contribution to the volume; and it has been said of him personally that he did more by his individual efforts towards enlarging the boundaries of free enquiry within the Church of England than any other single man.[3] We shall see hereafter that there is no real freedom without the Church unless there is freedom within it; so that whatever the clergy owe to Wilson, the laity owe him as much or more. Second only to Wilson, if second indeed, was Dr. Rowland Williams, already mentioned as one of the 'neologists' associated with Jowett in the denunciations of the 'Quarterly Review.' He was at that time Vice-President and Professor of Hebrew at Lampeter, and had been a Fellow and Tutor at King's College, Cambridge. Among the six clerical contributors he was the only Cambridge essayist. Downrightness

[1] 'Life of Jowett,' Vol. I., p. 275.
[2] 'Westminster Review,' Vol. XVIII., p. 299.
[3] 'Life of Jowett,' Vol. I., p. 301.

and plain speaking are perhaps a little more encouraged at Cambridge than at Oxford. At any rate, they are more conspicuous in Rowland Williams than in any of his colleagues, except Charles Goodwin, also a Cambridge man, and the only lay contributor to the volume. Williams was also distinguished by a certain Celtic impetuosity, spoken of as 'dangerous';[1] but this was not an enterprise in which any one who dreaded danger should have embarked, or could have been of much use.

The other contributors were Baden Powell, Mark Pattison, and Frederick Temple, at that time Headmaster of Rugby, and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. Baden Powell, whose place in the Broad Church movement has been already described, held, or at least put forward, the most advanced views of the whole band. Pattison had been a Newmanite, and ended as an agnostic. On this occasion he wrote merely as a historian of early eighteenth-century rationalism in England, without committing himself to more than a general denunciation of the 'godless orthodoxy' which now, as in the fifteenth century, was threatening to extinguish religious thought altogether.[2] Temple showed his liberality afterwards by accepting the doctrine of evolution rather sooner than the great mass of the clergy, but for the rest left theology at the dawn of the twentieth century very much as he found it in the middle of the nineteenth. He was a hard worker, but his work never took the form of deep thought. His Essay on the 'Education of the World' is what might have been expected from a distinguished schoolmaster. It would seem that the nations, like English public schoolboys, have been left to do a good deal for themselves. Among other things they discovered the immortality of the soul, without having received any special revelation on the subject. The Jews, for some unexplained reason, enjoyed the special tuition of a sort of higher Arnold. Newman had managed to combine much the same view of history with unimpeachable orthodoxy; but, according to his interpretation, the Church occasionally intervenes to save supernaturalism by adjudicating with infallible authority on the confused or uncertain results of mere human speculation.

For the rest Temple's essay was but a mediocre performance,

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 274: 'genius somewhat dangerously blent with Celtic fire.'

[2] 'Essays and Reviews,' p. 297.

and looks as if it had been placed first in the series to disarm criticism by its safe and respectable tone. If so, the attempt very nearly succeeded. But it came too late. A force had been let loose which could neither be recalled nor controlled.

If ever one were tempted to think of the spirit of the age as an overruling power, an impersonal principle of choice and direction, using individual volitions almost against their own intention for the furtherance of great general ends, such an idea might well be suggested by the history of 'Essays and Reviews.' It was, as I have said, originally designed to free liberal theology from the yoke under which it had hitherto suffered in silence. But the insurgents cannot be said to have disposed their forces in the manner best calculated to secure that result. To begin with, they should not have associated even a single layman with their enterprise, whereas, besides Goodwin, two were invited, and promised to help, but fortunately failed to do so. Goodwin sent a paper on the 'Mosaic Cosmogony,' showing conclusively that the story of the Creation in Genesis cannot on any interpretation be reconciled with the facts of geology, and incidentally pointing out that Genesis gives not one but two mutually contradictory accounts of how the world was made. But his argument attracted little attention, as it did not come from a clergyman, nor even from a professional geologist; whereas the public whose sympathies it was desired to enlist could only be won by a show of combined authority and courage. Temple's essay might have made a sensation had it appeared thirty years earlier, but was too vague and colourless for the crisis of 1860. Mark Pattison wrote about the English deists in a purely historical spirit, holding aloof almost contemptuously from the conflict actually in progress. Jowett's long study on the 'Interpretation of Scripture,' which filled nearly a fourth of the volume, was originally destined for a new edition of his 'St. Paul,' but seemed decidedly tame as compared with some of the dissertations contained in the first edition. For literary grace, for adroitness of suggestion, for religious unction, it ranks with his best work; but, unlike Emerson's Essays or the author's own essay on the Atonement, it neither unfurls a hero's banner nor peals with an oracular voice. What really counted, what made the volume a religious

fire-ship, were Rowland Williams' review of Bunsen's 'Biblical Researches,' Wilson's paper on the 'National Church,' and Baden Powell's 'Study of the Evidences of Christianity.'

This last was with perfect justice described soon after the appearance of 'Essays and Reviews' as the Tract XC. of the new Oxford Movement. In substance it is a summary of the arguments already put forward in the Savilian Professor's work on the 'Order of Nature.' The object of that treatise was to show that miracles are impossible, in the sense in which we say that an uncaused event is impossible. But if this be indeed the teaching of modern science, then miracles cannot be included among the evidences of Christianity. For how can faith in any doctrine or body of doctrine be justified by what, were it accepted, would be the most difficult of all doctrines, the notion that God, whose existence is proved by the invariable order of nature, occasionally thinks fit to interrupt that order? For himself, Baden Powell does not absolutely reject the alternative that miracles may be taken on faith like any other unintelligible mystery. But his decorous evasion need not be treated more seriously than the transparent irony of Hume and Bentham. The suggestion of a 'mythic or parabolic sense' in the Gospel narratives, agrees better with the constant tenour of his teaching. In his previous publications, Powell had always presented the unreality of miracles as part and parcel of the general doctrine of evolution—a doctrine then maintained among English Churchmen by himself alone, and by few besides him in the world. He had always insisted that the fixity of species was not a true theory, because it would necessitate an isolated act of creation for every species; that is to say, as many miracles as there were species, which is a scientific impossibility. And now in his philosophical testament—for he died immediately after the publication of 'Essays and Reviews'—he has the supreme satisfaction of appealing on behalf of his favourite principle to a work which had just appeared, by a 'naturalist of the most acknowledged authority, Mr. Darwin's masterly volume on "The Origin of Species" by the law of "natural selection"—which now substantiates on undeniable grounds the very principle so long denounced by the first naturalists, *the origination of new species by natural causes*: a work which must soon bring about an entire revolution of opinion in

favour of the grand principle of the self-evolving powers of nature.'[1]

Nor was Darwin's the only scientific generalisation, or the widest, that could be invoked on that side. Powell refers also to 'the simple but grand truth of the law of conservation' as but the type of 'the universal self-containing and self-evolving powers which pervade all nature.'[2] What place this grand truth leaves for the personality of God or the freedom of man does not appear; and it can hardly surprise us if conclusions unfavourable to the essayist's theism suggested themselves to readers of all schools. Oddly enough his argument about miracles was described by Arthur Stanley in a private letter as 'representing the common view of the religious world much more nearly than they would like to admit.'[3] The religious world at that time looked on human life, and by consequence the whole of nature, as a theatre of perpetual interventions, known in their dialect as 'special providences.'

Baden Powell nowhere mentions Mansel by name; but his exclusion of miracles from the evidences of Christianity, if accepted by the religious world, would have been ruinous to the whole argument of the Bampton Lecturer for 1858. If alleged communications from an unknowable Absolute and Infinite Being were not guaranteed by displays of superhuman power, they had no guarantee whatever; and revelation must again be submitted to the repudiated moral criticism of Kant.

Prophecy, in the sense of supernatural prediction, appeals more strongly to the imagination of pietists, at least among ourselves, than accounts of miracles, always unverifiable, related with serious discrepancies in the tradition, unpleasantly like conjurors' tricks, and still more unpleasantly associated with the performances of Roman Catholic saints. Scriptural miracles are taken on trust from the Bible, and the Bible is taken on trust from its accurate anticipations of the papal apostasy, of the empires built up by such foreign potentates as are particularly disliked in this country; and, during the pauses of political excitement, by the sufferings or the prosperity of

[1] 'Essays and Reviews,' p. 139.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 134.
[3] 'Life of Stanley,' Vol. II., p. 34.

the Jews, whatever happens to this remarkable people being equally pressed into the service of the faith which they reject. All this phantasmagoria melted away like morning mist before the impetuous and uncompromising scholarship of Rowland Williams. His 'Celtic fire' proved dangerous indeed to superstition, if not to the timid spectators who shrank back appalled from the roar and blaze of its conflagration. Such craven souls found no sympathy in him. 'The attitude of too many English scholars,' he exclaims, 'is that of the degenerate senators before Tiberius. They stand balancing terror against shame. Even with those in our universities who no longer repeat fully the required Shibboleths, the explicitness of truth is rare. He who assents most, committing himself least to baseness, is reckoned wisest.'[1]

It is hard to see how any more effectual course could have been adopted for putting an end to this ignoble silence than that chosen by Dr. Williams. He opens his review of Bunsen's researches with the very just observation that no living author's works could furnish so pregnant a text for a discourse on Biblical criticism. Baron von Bunsen was married to an Englishwoman, had served as Prussian Ambassador to the Court of St. James's from 1841 to 1854, and was therefore a well-known figure in the best English society. The veriest bigot could hardly speak of him as an unpractical dreamer, a neologist of the cloister; his studies had the wide range which secures sanity and mental balance, and his piety was as genuine as his scholarship.[2] At that period, and long afterwards, a notion was sedulously propagated among the English clergy that a great reaction had taken place in German theology since Rose delivered his warning discourses from the Cambridge pulpit, and that the truth of every statement in the Bible had been triumphantly vindicated by a new school of criticism, under the guidance of such scholars as Hengstenberg and Tholuck. These men, it was said, studied the facts instead of accommodating facts to theories, like the Hegelians, Vatke, Strauss, and Baur. The truth is that in Germany, as elsewhere,

[1] 'Essays and Reviews,' p. 53.

[2] Bunsen was 'looked on as a Pietist by the intellectual classes of' Germany. 'When he first came to England Exeter Hall received him with open arms' (Professor E. B. Tylor in the 'Fortnightly Review,' New Series, Vol. III., p. 716).

there had been a pietistic revival consequent on the romantic movement, which had called into existence a school of retrograde theology, occupying very much the same position that Tractarianism occupied in England, but associated with even more reactionary political ideas. Many worthless productions of that school were translated into English, and still cumber the shelves of our public libraries with the weight of their unsounded dulness. But there was no real retrogression among the leading minds of Germany, only perhaps to some extent a temporary slackening in the rate of progress. And no better type of this continuously liberal tradition could have been chosen than Bunsen, if only because he, like Ewald, would have nothing to do with the extreme tendencies represented by Tübingen.

In enumerating the results reached by Bunsen, the reviewer does not pledge himself to their accuracy; nor indeed was it necessary that he should endorse them. His object was to show how very widely a respected foreign scholar could depart from what in England passed for the sole saving faith, while yet holding fast to Christian belief. At the same time his general sympathy with the new views is unconcealed. He agrees with Bunsen in claiming for mankind a vastly greater antiquity than that commonly admitted, and mentions 20,000 years as a not improbable figure. Three years later even Sir Charles Lyell was afraid to speak out plainly on this alarming subject. The early chapters of Genesis are drawn from traditions of no historical value. The Pentateuch is a compilation reaching down to the age of Hezekiah. The slaying of the first-born in Egypt may have been the work of a Bedouin host, and the passage of the Red Sea 'may be interpreted with the latitude of poetry.'[1]

If the Bible does not always give the history of the past with literal accuracy, it does not give the history of the future at all. Prophecy means moral and spiritual teaching, not secular prognostication. In this connexion the composite character of 'Isaiah,' and the evident reference to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes in Daniel, are briefly indicated. A number of minor misinterpretations are summarily disposed of, and the reviewer concludes by pointing out that 'when so vast an induction on

[1] 'Essays and Reviews,' p. 59.

the destructive side has been gone through it avails little that some passages may be doubtful, one perhaps in Zechariah, and one in Isaiah, being capable of a direct Messianic application, and a chapter in Deuteronomy possibly foreshadowing the final fall of Jerusalem. Even these few cases, the remnant of so much confident rhetoric, tend to melt, if they are not already melted, in the crucible of searching enquiry.'[1]

Of all these alleged predictions the dearest to English hearts, and, as seemed to popular English theology, the most convincing proof of miraculous foresight, was the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah with its touching account of Iahveh's servant led to death like a lamb to the slaughter for the sins of his people. And in a sense it *is* predictive, though not originally uttered as a prophecy, for beyond doubt it suggested the notion of a suffering Messiah, and the mystical interpretation of the Crucifixion as an expiation of man's guilt. But Bunsen explains it as a tribute to Jeremiah, and Williams more generally, with Ewald, as the delineation of an idealised Israel, the prophetic remnant of whom Jeremiah was one.

What, then, becomes of Inspiration? It remains, but without its earlier limitations. 'The Bible is before all things the written voice of the congregation,'[2] and the Church is the successor of the congregation, like it composed of fallible members, but like it promised illumination from an indwelling Spirit.

Naturally this mode of treatment extends itself from the Old Testament to the New. But here the reviewer, feeling himself on more slippery ground, is more careful to emphasise the exclusive responsibility of his guide. Bunsen finds in the first three Gospels divergent forms of an Apostolic tradition.[3] As for the fourth, it was composed so late as to give time enough for 'the passing of the symbol into the story.'[4] Interpreted in reference to the fall of Jerusalem, the Apocalypse 'ceases to be a riddle.'[5] 'The second Petrine Epistle, having alike external and internal evidence against its genuineness, is necessarily surrendered as a whole;'[6] and Williams seems more than willing to surrender the parts also.

Catholic dogma fares considerably worse than the canonical

[1] *Op cit.*, pp. 69–70. [2] P. 78. [3] P. 83.
[4] P. 84. [5] *Ibid.* [6] *Ibid.*

books. By the account given of him here, Bunsen seems to have been a Sabellian; and his Welsh admirer seems to think none the worse of him for his heresy. 'The incarnation becomes with our author as purely spiritual as it was with St. Paul'[1]—who presumably knew nothing of a Virgin-birth. Our reviewer's style bears a close resemblance to James Martineau's; and for the thought, there is nothing Martineau could not have subscribed in the following sentences:—

'Though the true substance of Deity took body in the Son of Man, they who know the Divine Substance to be Spirit will conceive of such embodiment of the Eternal Mind very differently from those who abstract all Divine attributes, such as consciousness, forethought, and love, and then imagine a material residuum on which they confer the Holiest name. The Divine attributes are consubstantial with the Divine Essence. He who abides in love abides in God and God in him.'[2] 'The unity of God as the eternal Father is the fundamental doctrine of Christianity' (Bunsen). 'But the Divine Consciousness or Wisdom, consubstantial with the Eternal Will, becoming personal in the Son of Man, is the express image of the Father, and Jesus actually, but also mankind ideally, is the Son of God.'[3]

Such phrases vividly recall similar expressions used by Coleridge, and quoted in a former chapter. Nor is the resemblance accidental. Coleridge's pantheism reached its final shape under Schelling's influence, and Bunsen had been a friend and admirer of that philosopher, with whose romanticism he sympathised. His interpretation of dogma, whatever its origin, strikes the reviewer as having 'a Sabellian or almost a Brahmanical sound.'[4] At the same time certain Fathers—themselves of doubtful orthodoxy—are mentioned as authorities in its favour. Like Coleridge again, Bunsen explains the Fall as 'ideally representing the circumscription of our spirits in limits of flesh and time, and practically the selfish nature with which we fall from the likeness of God, which should be fulfilled in man.'[5] 'The Atonement'—still according to Bunsen—implies 'salvation from evil through sharing the Saviour's spirit' rather than a 'purchase from God through the price of his bodily pangs.'[6]

[1] P. 82. [2] *Ibid.* [3] Pp. 88–9.
[4] P. 89. [5] P. 88. [6] P. 87.

Why may not St. Paul's 'justification by faith have meant the peace of mind or sense of Divine approval which comes of trust in a righteous God, rather than a fiction of merit by transfer? . . . Faith would be opposed not to good deeds which conscience requires, but to works of appeasement by ritual. Justification would be neither an arbitrary ground of confidence, nor a reward upon condition of our disclaiming merit, but rather a verdict of forgiveness upon our repentance, and of acceptance upon the offering of our hearts.'[1] Regeneration is 'an awakening of the forces of the soul . . . propitiation the recovery of that peace which cannot be while sin divides us from the Searcher of hearts.' Under this treatment the fires of hell are spiritualised into 'images of distracted remorse;' while heaven becomes 'not so much a place as fulfilment of the love of God.'[2]

Advanced Broad Churchmen in the fifties evidently looked on sacerdotalism as a lost cause, and they sometimes show a tendency to discredit their conservative opponents by identifying the popular theology with its seemingly obsolete pretensions. And the imputation of sacerdotalism was one that Mansel or Conybeare would have relished no more than Henry Rogers or Isaac Taylor. At any rate, orthodox Churchmen would no more have rested the claims of what they called Revelation on ecclesiastical authority than would orthodox Dissenters. External evidence and a balance of difficulties, with some Protestant Via Media as the resultant line of belief, made the substance of their apologetics. Hence the almost complete identification of religion with the Bible in 'Essays and Reviews'—or at least with the Bible as interpreted by or accommodated to individual reason and conscience.

There is, however, an important exception to this practice. One of the contributors, already described as the organiser of the whole manifesto, H. B. Wilson, rises to a more commanding view of the situation. Except Baden Powell, he was the oldest of the band, yet his essay is the most modern-minded of the seven, and sometimes gives the illusion of having been written for our own day; as when he refers to the 'statistical proof' that millions of English people attend no place of worship,[3]

[1] Pp. 80–1. [2] Pp. 81–2.

[3] 'Essays and Reviews,' p. 150.

or again, when he enlarges on the impression produced by the discovery, or rather the realisation, that there are, and long have been, great nations with ancient religions of their own whom the Christian revelation has never reached, nor is in the least likely to penetrate.[1] Wilson had been a contemporary and opponent of the Tractarian movement; but he seems to have received a sort of induction current from its energy. Or perhaps it would be truer to say that, like Edward Irving and Dr. Arnold, he had drawn inspiration from the same source as Newman, from the Continental imperialism of Napoleon, idealised into the thought of a Divine Kingdom. And just as Napoleon narrowed, perverted, literally speaking Romanised, the eighteenth-century idea of a world-wide humanity, so also Bonald, Joseph de Maistre, Lamennais, and their English imitators narrowed, perverted, and Romanised it into the idea of a Catholic Church founded on theological dogmas, and administered by clerical bigots. Coleridge took a far wider view both of the invisible Church, embracing all mankind, and of the National Church, which is simply the nation considered under its religious aspect. But his violent English prejudices, combined with his anxiety to stand well with the Bishops, prevented his theory of Church and State from attaining perfect logical development and adequate clearness of expression.

Wilson builds on Coleridge's foundation in respect to the constitution of a religious society, just as the other essayists build on Coleridge's metaphysical and critical principles in their theology and their exegetics. And this high social point of view gives a comprehensive character to his rationalism which theirs does not possess. The old argument from the spread of Christianity to its supernatural origin vanishes directly when examined in the light of the religious history of the East. Similarly with the *a priori* argument that the hopelessly corrupt state of the Roman empire demanded a new revelation, just at the time when Christianity appeared. If so, India and China demanded it much more. If salvation is determined by belief, either in the Calvinist or the Catholic sense, it is incredible that the conditions of salvation should have been revealed to so few. Nor does the early history of Christianity

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

go to prove that there is a necessary connexion between purity of faith and purity of morals. And, in fact, the genuine teaching of Jesus seems to have been ethical rather than doctrinal. In this connexion Wilson gives his opinion pretty plainly about the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel. 'It cannot by external evidence be attached to the person of St. John as its author: that is, there is no proof that St. John gives his voucher as an eye and ear witness of all which is related in it.'[1] Now, it is just in this Gospel that the discourses cease to have a direct moral bearing.

Again the effacement of the hard-and-fast line between the Jews and other nations, which Milman had begun by calling Abraham a Sheikh, is here carried out with a bolder hand. 'Heathendom had its original Churches;' and 'the priesthood was by no means supreme in the Hebrew State.'[2] Such a statement implies that large portions of the Pentateuch are anachronistic fictions; and Wilson does not shrink from assuming as much. 'It seems probable that the priesthood with its distinct offices and charges was constituted by Royalty, and that the higher pretensions of the priests were not advanced till the reign of Josiah.' More generally 'Jewish history presents little which is thoroughly reliable before the taking of Jerusalem by "Shishak."'[3]

Wilson, who had a good deal of the lawyer about him, tries to show that there is nothing inconsistent with the obligations assumed by an English clergyman in the public expression of these and similar opinions; and here the event proved that he was right. But in order that the Church may be made coextensive with the nation, and that candidates of the highest culture may not be excluded from its ministry, he demands the complete abolition of clerical subscription. The object of this and of all other reforms must be to make the Church a more perfect instrument for carrying out the will of God as manifested in the moral law. But the realisation of that will must extend beyond the limits of her activity, however widely drawn. In a passage full of dignity and pathos, the noblest indeed to be found in the whole volume, our essayist conceives the training of human souls as a process continued after death in

[1] 'Essays and Reviews,' p. 161.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 169.
[3] P. 170.

other worlds until 'all, both small and great, shall find a refuge in the bosom of the universal Parent, to repose or be quickened into higher life in the ages to come according to His Will.'

This passage alone in the essay came well within the comprehension of the ordinary English understanding as then defined; and this accordingly was singled out for quotation and denunciation, until eternal hope was absolved from the charge of being heretical by the memorable judgment which liberated the Church from bondage to a barbarous superstition.

For several months the Broad Church manifesto hung fire. It was, as I have said, imperfectly organised, the effect of the three central and militant essays being damped by their association with four others of a milder or more neutral character. And it seems probable that Baden Powell's death, which occurred almost immediately after the publication of the volume, somewhat diminished the authority of his attack on miracles. Even at Oxford attention was absorbed by the controversies connected with Darwin's 'Origin of Species' to the exclusion of every other philosophical issue; and the reviews were fully occupied by the same exciting topic. As for the country at large, it was chiefly interested in Mr. Gladstone's Budget, Garibaldi's Sicilian expedition, the Volunteers, and 'The Mill on the Floss.'

At length what the disunited band of liberals had aimed at doing but had failed to do for the cause of light and freedom was done for it by a more advanced rationalist than themselves. The 'Westminster Review,' which had long been the leading organ of progressive thought, opened in October, 1860, with an article on 'Essays and Reviews,' entitled 'Neo-Christianity.' This article has never been acknowledged, but was reported at the time to come from the pen of a young Oxford Comtist;[1] and it is proved by internal evidence to be at any rate the work of one who was more or less an adherent of the Positivist school. Sharing, to all appearance, the conviction of his great

[1] I may mention that the authorship of the article by Mr. Frederic Harrison has been practically acknowledged by the publication of two letters from Jowett to him on the subject ('Jowett's Letters,' pp. 14 and 16). At that time Mr. Harrison seems to have disclaimed the name of positivist; but in giving it to him public opinion was only anticipating subsequent developments.

master that Christianity as the ultimate form of theology is rapidly approaching its extinction, he welcomes and proclaims the unexpected help supplied by its accredited teachers toward the work of demolition. All their reticences are forced, and all their evasions cut off. The central essays furnish, as I have shown, ample materials for crediting their authors with a complete abandonment of the popular religion; and subsequent disclosures have shown that not these writers only, but Pattison and Jowett also, thought of it much as Euripides and Plato thought of the mythology of Greece. But the Westminster reviewer lays himself open to the charge of reading heresies into the essay on the 'Interpretation of Scripture' for which Jowett would have been very sorry to make himself publicly responsible, and of drawing consequences from the essay on the 'Education of the World' which Temple would at all times have repudiated with horror. In fact, he appears as a brilliant rhetorician with a tendency to extreme exaggeration, very characteristic of his subsequent contributions to journalism, although never since associated with such literary skill as is here displayed.

The title 'Neo-Christianity' was intended to suggest a parallel between the reconstituted theology of the essayists—which has continued to be the theology of the whole advanced Broad Church school ever since—and the abortive attempt of the Neo-Platonists to rehabilitate the mythology of early Hellas by interpreting its unedifying legends as allegories conveying sublime metaphysical and ethical truths. Iamblichus and Julian had failed miserably in their effort to adapt an effete Paganism to the philosophy of the fourth century; and so, it is predicted, will the Neo-Christians fail to gain acceptance for their new-fangled interpretation of Catholic mysteries, or to win popularity for a Bible stripped of its claims to divine authority and historical truth. Reduced to the level of the Apocrypha, it will be read as little as the Apocrypha is read now. A critic with a leaning towards positivism would naturally look on the religion of Humanity as the true successor of Christianity, and would feel a certain jealousy towards the modified theology which is threatening to seize the vacant place.

Like Wilson's Essay, the Westminster article has preserved

an extraordinary vitality through the years, approaching half a century, which have elapsed since its appearance. Indeed much of the reviewer's passionate protest against the Broad Church compromise seems more apposite now than when it was first uttered; for the breaches then made in the old faith were far less extensive than he imagined, or were subsequently filled up with a success on which he did not count. But with the final victory, within the Church, of the principles enunciated in 'Essays and Reviews' the question of their adequacy for the educated laity has returned. And so far, there seem no grounds for thinking that a modified version of Christianity, such as that advocated by the essayists, will not satisfy those with whom the need for religion exists. Their method may not be logical; but when did logic and the religious instinct go together? At any rate, 'Neo-Christianity' has, so far, proved conspicuously the faith of the educated classes in England, and seems more likely to absorb the religion of Humanity than to be absorbed by it. And evolution, if it is a dangerous ally for the Broad Church, appears quite as dangerous to the pretensions of positivism, whose local and temporary character comes out very clearly on taking broad views of historical development.

Meanwhile the attempt to extinguish Neo-Christianity blew it into a flame. Up till then the liberating effect of 'Essays and Reviews' had been retarded and nearly annihilated by the conservative elements with which their destructive criticism was associated. What excites no opposition wins no way, and the university authorities had wisely 'issued an order of the day "to ignore so painful a subject."'[1] But the Westminster Reviewer, by drawing their extreme consequences from the most advanced contributions, and by making all the contributors jointly responsible for the general tone and tendency of the whole volume, directly reversed the relation which had hitherto subsisted between them. What had before acted as a drag now served to increase the momentum of the critical onslaught, and made it too painful to be ignored. Two months after its appearance, the Westminster article was widely discussed

[1] 'Westminster Review' for October, 1860, p. 330. I do not know whether the words in quotation marks are to be literally or figuratively understood.

among the country clergymen who had come up to vote against the appointment of Max Müller to the chair of Sanskrit in the university of Oxford. Then came a denunciatory article on 'Essays and Reviews' in the 'Quarterly Review,' expressing full agreement with the Westminster critic as to the tendencies of the volume, but naturally from an opposite point of view. It was written by Bishop Wilberforce, who, if we may trust the most penetrating observer of the age, privately held opinions even more advanced than those of the clergymen whom he was publicly making a mark for obloquy and persecution. Strangely enough—or not strangely if we remember the attraction of high social position for a peasant, and of courtly manners for a studious recluse—Carlyle struck up an intimacy with one whom he must have looked on as a shovel-hatted windbag, and discovered that 'on serious subjects they thought at bottom very much alike';—'he thought,' Froude is told, 'in secret, in spite of his bishophood, very much in regard to religion as we do.'[1] In other words, he thought that miracles are impossible, and had the vaguest ideas about the personality of God. In his private journal he quoted Carlyle as being 'against the Essayists on dishonesty ground and atheistic.' Carlyle had probably never read their book, and was taking the Bishop's word for its drift. If so, he was taking the word of one whom he knew to be acting a lie against men who at least had the courage of their opinions.[2] Others with more excuse believed the charge when it was insinuated more delicately through the pages of the 'Quarterly Review.'

Not content with his anonymous attack, the Bishop of Oxford induced the whole episcopal bench, including Thirlwall and Hampden, to join in a collective denunciation of 'Essays and Reviews,' besides preaching against it at Oxford. No distinction was drawn between the different contributors, and even Temple ran some risk of being forced to resign the headmastership of Rugby.

At this juncture Arthur Stanley stepped in to the rescue of his personal friends, Temple and Jowett. This picturesque and

[1] Froude's 'Life of Carlyle,' Vol. IV., p. 419.

[2] 'Life of Bishop Wilberforce,' Vol. III., p. 8. Wilberforce, who had read the book, does not seem to have taken any trouble to set Carlyle right, supposing the error to have originated with the latter.

elegant writer belonged to a noble Whig family, and had a good deal in his composition of those old Whig statesmen whose policy was determined by their love of popularity, combined with their dread of democracy, and their persuasion that the interests of the multitude were best served by keeping a corrupt oligarchy in power. In theology he never spoke out; but a friend numbers him among the high ecclesiastics who agreed with Matthew Arnold,[1] although they would have said the same thing in a different way. In other words, he believed even less than Bishop Wilberforce. But he hated revolutionary methods, and failed to see that freedom, whether within or without the Church, could be obtained by nothing less than revolt and defiance.

Stanley had refused to contribute to 'Essays and Reviews,' and had even advised his friend Jowett, who appealed to him for help, to have nothing to do with the scheme, which in his opinion was a blunder. But when the storm broke he came, as I have said, to the rescue, not indeed of the whole band, but of Temple and Jowett. Writing in the 'Edinburgh Review' for April, 1861, he gives an account of the circumstances leading up to the publication of the incriminated volume, which, considering what he knew of the real facts, can scarcely be characterised as anything but a disingenuous attempt to mislead public opinion. The 'Westminster' and 'Quarterly Reviews,' while they are justly made responsible for the outcry raised against its authors, are most unjustly and even absurdly accused of 'displaying, or affecting, the most astonishing ignorance of all that had passed in theological literature in this and other countries since the beginning of the century.'[2] They did not know, forsooth, that Herder, Schleiermacher, and Ewald had said about as strong things, and yet Christianity had not been destroyed. As if conservative divines did not look on German theology as merely the latest form of infidelity, and as if their whole object for the last thirty years had not been to keep it

[1] Max Müller in 'Cosmopolis,' Vol. V., p. 649. In 'Auld Lang Syne,' p. 115, the passage is slightly altered so as not to compromise Stanley. But the original version seems to me the more trustworthy.

[2] 'Edinburgh Review' for April, 1861, p. 466. In the reprint this is softened down to 'overlooked' (Stanley's 'Essays on Church and State,' p. 52).

out of England. Coleridge, Thirlwall, Arnold, and Milman are cited as having each to some extent called in question the infallibility of the Bible. But Coleridge was a layman; Thirlwall translated Schleiermacher's St. Luke before his ordination; Arnold and Milman were notoriously spoken of as infidels by Dr. Newman. Some unspecified concessions to modern criticism on the part of more recent writers in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible' and elsewhere, are also placed on a level with the sweeping negations of the Essayists, in a way which Stanley would not have been slow to denounce as gross misrepresentation had the parallel been drawn in an opposite interest by another pen.

In his discussion of the individual contributors, Temple and Jowett are carefully separated from their colleagues and placed far above them in merit. Stanley had no knowledge even of the most elementary science, and no intelligence of the simplest philosophical reasoning. In private he admitted that he could not understand Baden Powell's argument against miracles.[1] Possibly his views on that subject became more developed in later life under Matthew Arnold's influence. Goodwin is 'needlessly offensive and irritating.' Rowland Williams, besides being taunted for his Welsh blood, is severely censured for the 'flippant, contemptuous, and most unbecoming' tone of his remarks, as well as for the way in which Bunsen's conclusions are 'pitchforked into the face of the English public who never heard of them before.'[2] As if the English public could have their attention drawn to scientific conclusions by any other process, as if sweet reasonableness had not long been tried, and tried in vain! Wilson's power is acknowledged, but the whole point of his essay—the dissociation of the ideal church from dogma and sacerdotalism—is missed, and therefore the bearing of the Biblical criticism with which it is interwoven is misconceived. Mark Pattison, so much Stanley's superior in scholarship and force of thought, escapes with some rather supercilious patronage.

'We are stepping on fast and far.' So Buckle wrote at this time in view of a crisis whose development he was not long permitted to watch and stimulate. Freethought was best

[1] 'Life,' Vol. II., p. 34.

[2] 'Edinburgh Review,' *ut supra*, p. 474.

served by its bitterest enemies. In the course of the following year (1862) the two essayists who held benefices were prosecuted for heresy, Rowland Williams by the Bishop of Salisbury, H. B. Wilson by a brother clergyman named Sendal. The two cases were tried together in the Court of Arches before Dr. Lushington. Wilson defended himself; Williams was defended by a rising young barrister of transcendent literary ability named Fitzjames Stephen, at that time rather orthodox than otherwise, but destined hereafter to figure as a champion of the freest discussion in theology, and of the most advanced rationalistic opinions. On various points of first-rate importance Dr. Lushington's judgment was in favour of the defendants. What was most important of all, it declared that 'it is open for the clergy to maintain that any book in the Bible is the work of another author than him whose name it bears'—words interpreted by the Judge to mean 'that the clergy are at liberty to reject parts of Scripture, upon their own opinion that the narrative is inherently incredible; to disregard precepts in Holy Writ because they think them evidently wrong.'

On three points, however, the two divines were condemned by Dr. Lushington, and sentenced to a year's suspension from their livings. They appealed to the Privy Council, by whose final judgment, delivered through Lord Chancellor Westbury, the adverse sentence was reversed in all particulars. On this occasion the eternity of future punishment was ruled to be an open question. 'Hell dismissed with costs' was the comment of a witty barrister on this momentous decision by which the Church of England was set free from mediaeval superstition. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, who sat on the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, dissented.[1] On a question of dogma their opinion probably represented the apostolic tradition better than that of their lay assessors; and it is not uncharitable to assume that a forced interpretation was put on the law by the majority of its highest interpreters in deference to the rationalistic spirit of the age. As often happens in England, the judges were virtually acting as legislators, both here and in the Court of Arches; and the applause with which their sentence was received showed that the feeling of the country was with them. All for which the Broad Church

[1] 'Life of Stanley,' Vol. II., p. 43.

clergy had been contending for the last ten years was conceded. Carlyle had called them sentries who ought to be shot for deserting their post. They were really pioneers in front of an advancing army; and to shoot them would have been the stupidest of blunders. But Carlyle never quite understood either the age or the country in which he lived.

Within the Church a large party would willingly have abjured the liberty forced on them by the State. Dr. Pusey, the head of the High Church party, drew up, with the full adhesion of the Low Church, a declaration expressing belief in the verbal inspiration of Scripture and in everlasting torments, which was 'sent round to every clergyman in England, Wales, and Ireland, accompanied by a letter entreating him to sign it "for the love of God."'[1] It obtained 11,000 signatures—won perhaps less by the love of God than by the fear of man. Numerous, however, as were the signatories, the balance of authority, as measured by position and learning, went heavily against them. Out of thirty Deans only eight adhered to Pusey's declaration; out of forty Oxford Professors only nine; out of twenty-nine Cambridge Professors only one.[2]

What Froude, with evident reference to the controversies of his own time, had just been writing about the Catholicism of the sixteenth century was eminently applicable to the creed of Pusey and his Low Church allies. 'Credible to the student in the cloister, credible to those whose thoughts were but echoes of tradition, it was not credible any more to men of active and original vigour of understanding. Credible to the uneducated, the eccentric, the imaginative, the superstitious; credible to those who reasoned by sentiment and made syllogisms of their passions; it was incredible then and evermore to the sane and healthy intelligence which in the long run commands the mind of the world.'[3] Before the declaration had been drawn up a much stronger force than that of the Essayists and a more irreversible judgment than that of the Court of Arches or the Privy Council had been brought to bear on the question of

[1] *Op cit.*, p. 158.

[2] 'Life of F. D. Maurice,' Vol. II., p. 470. I have seen it stated elsewhere that not one Cambridge Professor signed.

[3] 'History of England,' Vol. VI., pp. 113–14.

Biblical infallibility. Towards the end of 1862, John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal, published the first part of his 'Critical Examination of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua,' followed by others in rapid succession. Here there was no ambiguity, no reserve, no conspiracy of silence. From the beginning Colenso's object was apparent, and had been recognised by the whole world for what it really was, if not with equal unanimity for what it was worth. Opinions might differ as to whether the Bishop had proved his case, but not, at least then, as to the revolution in religious thought which must follow were it proved. In fact, it was proved, and in fact a revolution did come to pass; but his own share in the work has been surrounded by such persistent misrepresentations, still surviving in the popular literature of the present day, that here also, as with 'Essays and Reviews,' some explanations are necessary in order to a right apprehension of the case.

A Cambridge mathematician of the Evangelical school, Colenso had become acquainted, rather early in life, with the writings of Coleridge and Maurice, and had formed an intimate friendship with the latter, whose doctrinal views he seems to have gradually adopted. In 1853 he was made Bishop of Natal, notwithstanding a violent attack occasioned by his connexion with Maurice. A 'Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,' published in 1861, ranged him definitely on the side of the Broad Church party, so far as the interpretation of Christian doctrine was concerned. But hitherto he had not allowed his thoughts to dwell on questions of Biblical criticism. He had occasionally felt difficulties in connexion with various points in the Old Testament narrative, but had not let them interfere with his pastoral labours. As it happened, however, his occupation as a missionary made it necessary to take up a more definite attitude. An intelligent native convert, who was helping him to translate the Pentateuch into Zulu, asked the Bishop point-blank 'did he really believe that the story of the Deluge was all true—that all the beasts and birds and creeping things upon the earth, large and small, came thus by pairs and entered into the ark with Noah?' 'And did Noah gather food for them *all*, for the beasts and birds of prey as well as for the rest?'[1]

[1] 'Examination,' Part I., p. vii.

Great store is commonly set on the ethical value of religious belief; and although religious people, as such, are habitually less scrupulous about truth-telling than about any other virtue, they cannot altogether exclude it from morality. Colenso's heart answered in the words of the Prophet, Shall a man speak lies in the name of the LORD? His knowledge of geology made him quite sure that the things related in Genesis had not really happened; there never had been such a deluge as is there described. What he told the Zulu is not recorded; but their conversation led him to make a comprehensive study of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua (which really form a single whole), with a view to ascertaining their historical value. His business was not, primarily, to discover when or by whom these documents were written, whether, as most religious Englishmen believed, the 'books of Moses' were the work of a single author, or whether, as the best Continental scholars since Richard Simon had taught, they were a gradual accretion whose composition had extended over many hundreds of years. That was a question he was fully prepared to discuss when the proper time for its consideration should arrive; but any views he might form on the subject could hardly hope for a fair hearing so long as enquiry was blocked by the prevailing prejudice that all, or nearly all, the Pentateuch came from the hand of Moses, writing not only as an eye-witness of the events narrated from the first chapter of Exodus to the last of Deuteronomy, but also under the direct inspiration of Almighty God, with a guarantee against any, even the slightest, inaccuracy. Now, when a narrative contains precise numerical statements, there can be no readier or surer negative test of its trustworthiness than what is supplied by comparing these with one another and with the acknowledged laws of existence. It need not necessarily be true, even should no manifest inconsistency result from the confrontation, although this would justify a certain presumption in its favour; but in the event of its breaking down under that test, all claim to infallibility must disappear; while if contradictions and impossibilities should be multiplied to any serious extent, the credit of the documents under examination may be brought down to a vanishing point. As it happens, the Hexateuch swarms with numerical statements, set out with the utmost precision, and in the most

important cases guaranteed against textual error by being repeated in different combinations which practically work out to the same result. As the first of living arithmeticians, Colenso was peculiarly well qualified to deal with the problems arising from this network of statistical relations. Accordingly the first part of his critical examination is exclusively devoted to this aspect of the Biblical question.

As is well known, the result of applying this method was to convince the Bishop of 'the unhistorical character of very considerable portions of the Mosaic narrative.' According to Genesis, the band of Hebrews who went down into Egypt with Jacob numbered only seventy souls. According to Exodus, in a little over a century their descendants had grown into a nation numbering 600,000 fighting men, that is to say, amounting to from two and a half to three millions of human beings. Population does not multiply at this rate, and the sequel proves the figure to be fabulous. That such a vast multitude should have had the least difficulty in resisting the oppression of the Egyptians, and that they should have been able to subsist for forty years in the desert of Sinai, are assertions in the highest degree improbable. That they should have been able in the course of their wanderings to carry out various specified prescriptions of the Levitical law is shown by certain curious calculations, which Colenso was the first to make, to have been absolutely impossible.

There is by this time no temerity in saying that the Bishop was perfectly successful. If he did not prove his case, there is no such thing as negative historical criticism in the world. Every attempt to meet his arguments involved assumptions such as no court of justice outside a French court-martial would listen to for a moment—assumptions such as might equally well be used to prove the truth of any religion in the world, or to disprove the existence of the Bible itself. Among those who are acquainted with the facts there is no longer any dispute about the unhistorical character of the so-called Mosaic narrative as it stands. It is also agreed that the Hexateuch consists of various distinct documents, due to various hands, and composed for the most part, if not entirely, at such a distance in time from the events they profess to relate as to

deprive their statements of all historical value, except what belongs to an uncertain oral tradition. Religious believers may hold, if they like, that these late writers were put in possession of the facts by supernatural communication; but for all who use their reason such a hypothesis is at once excluded by the disagreement of the writers with one another, and by the impossibility of determining, in the absence of all evidence, which of them, if any, was favoured with this peculiar kind of information.

For general purposes it might be enough to know that Colenso proved his case, and that it is now universally admitted to be true. But to fix his proper place in the history of rationalism something more is required. We have to ask whether this great revolution in public opinion is due in any way, great or small, to his work. And there are many, from the accomplished Biblical scholar down to the ordinary curate or journalist, who would say with easy confidence that it was not. They would say that our present unanimity had been brought about by the convergent authority of various profound Biblical critics, well versed in the Oriental languages, and carrying on their enquiries in a cautious and reverent spirit; while the Bishop's rash and ignorant onslaught had rather created a prejudice against the cause for which he contended by playing into the hands of men animated by a spirit of ruthless hostility towards all that is associated with the holiest aspirations of humanity.

It may at once be admitted that the present state of opinion as regards Old Testament literature is primarily due to the great Continental critics, with Wellhausen at their head, who have poured such a flood of light on the Pentateuchal problem, and to the very able Hebrew scholars among ourselves who have done so much to popularise their discoveries. Here, as in other departments of knowledge, the agreement of experts among themselves has done wonders. Within a very few years from the time when a single lucid self-consistent theory of the Biblical origins, sustained at every point by solid arguments, had been substituted for the arbitrary and conflicting guesses of earlier enquirers, it was accepted almost without a murmur by educated people of all creeds, as the conclusions of geology and biology had been accepted before it; and to reject the

higher criticism became as much a mark of eccentricity as to advocate it had been not very long before.

If, however, we take the trouble to go behind this great movement of opinion, we shall find that Colenso had not a little to do with its preparation, both in the way of diffusing what was already known, and also, even more, in the way of original investigation.

To begin with, we can hardly suppose that a work of which many thousand copies were sold and eagerly studied left no permanent impression on the beliefs of its readers. Of course every effort was made by his opponents to transfer the debate from the ground of reason to the ground of authority; and in itself this procedure was not wholly unjustifiable, when we take into account for how much authority counted on the Bishop's own behalf. People argued that a high ecclesiastical dignitary would not have given up Moses without the very strongest grounds for such a sacrifice of his old beliefs. And as everybody who could work a sum had been brought up on Colenso's 'Arithmetic,' his calculations about the number of pigeons that each priest was daily bound by the Levitical law to consume, were passed without examination.

On the other hand, Colenso by his ingenuous simplicity laid himself open to an extent of which his opponents were not slow to take advantage. We have seen how a plain question put by a Zulu convert first turned his thoughts in the direction of rationalistic criticism. It is probable that many besides him might have traced the beginning of a momentous revolution in their conduct or their convictions to some such almost accidental awakening. When it takes the form of a conversion from doubt to faith, scoffs are not heard, and would not be tolerated. In this instance the reverse happened; and so people thought it very witty to taunt the missionary Bishop with having been converted by the savages whom he went out to convert. Matthew Arnold, who for the moment was not ashamed to place himself on the level of Dr. Cumming, talked about 'the titter of educated Europe.' As it happened, educated Europe, outside England, saw nothing ridiculous in what its highest representative, Ernest Renan, called an act of honesty without parallel in the history of the Christian Church. If Continental scholars saw anything to laugh at it was the

extraordinary ignorance and bigotry of the English Episcopate. And amongst the English laity at least, there were many who liked Colenso none the worse for his straightforward simplicity and plain speaking. At Harrow, where he had once been a master, the boys greeted his appearance with a hearty double set of cheers;[1] and at a meeting of the British Association in the evangelical city of Bath a speech made by him was received with peals of applause.[2]

Another point, also pressed by Matthew Arnold, and even hinted by Maurice, was that the critic of the Pentateuch still retained his bishopric after publicly professing views generally held to be inconsistent with the Ordination Service. As a matter of fact, Colenso thought of resigning his see, until the Lushington judgment set his scruples at rest. Few will regret that he adopted a course which enabled him to continue his heroic championship of the Zulus against the oppression of such religionists as Sir Bartle Frere.

These, however, were quite irrelevant issues. It was more serious when his opponents charged Colenso with want of breadth and scholarship, with repeating worn-out cavils, with ignorance of Hebrew, with knowing nothing of German criticism. The last accusation must have been found rather effective, for it has survived down to the present day, and has very recently been repeated by a liberal writer in a popular history of modern England.[3] Such statements show the depths to which theological animosity will descend; Colenso knew more Hebrew

[1] 'Life of Colenso,' Vol. I., p. 241. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 257.

[3] Mr. Herbert Paul tells his readers that Colenso 'knew little or nothing of Biblical research in Germany' ('A History of Modern England,' Vol. II., p. 400). The ignorance and rashness betrayed by that short sentence is nearly inconceivable on the part of a serious historian. Mr. Paul can never have read Colenso's 'Examination,' can never have glanced at the preface to his First Part, can never even have looked at the Bishop's Life by Sir George Cox. Before Colenso began to write he had made himself acquainted with the most important German literature on the subject of the Pentateuch; and as his work proceeded he kept abreast of the new criticism in Holland as well as in Germany. I wish to express all respect for Mr. Herbert Paul as a political historian; but as a historian of opinion his inaccuracy is astounding. He tells us that 'Pusey, not Newman, was the chief founder of the Oxford Movement' (Vol. II., p. 38). That he should never have read Newman's 'Apologia,' or that, having read it, he should make such a blunder, are alternatives almost equally incredible. According to him the Essayists 'were all but one Oxford men' (p. 390). 'An article in the "Westminster Review" claimed "Essays and

than most of the Bishops, and quite as much as his 'Examination' required. He was also familiar with the best German and Dutch literature of the subject. Indeed we are told on the very highest authority that he 'reopened the suspended intercourse between the students of England and the Continent.'[1] But in his first part, which was purely and avowedly destructive, there was no call for any display of acquaintance either with the Hebrew language or with any of the previous attempts to explain the origin and growth of the Pentateuch. In England at least it was necessary to clear the ground for such enquiries by showing that the so-called five books of Moses had not dropped like manna from the skies. Subsequent parts of Colenso's 'Examination' went very deeply into questions relating to the literary analysis of the Hexateuch, together with the age and authorship of its component parts; and in these the results of Continental criticism were fully utilised.

Writing as an amateur who had begun these studies late in life, the Bishop could not compete on equal terms with the trained scholars of Germany and Holland. Nevertheless, it so happened that his researches intervened at a decisive moment to change the course of Old Testament criticism; and, what is very curious, this new impulse came not from his more erudite labours, but from those minute arithmetical analyses which had aroused the merriment of Matthew Arnold, the pious indignation of Maurice, and the ignorant contempt of Bishop Wilberforce.

In order to explain how this momentous result was brought about I must ask leave to lay before the reader, as briefly as may be, some cardinal points of the higher criticism in its application to Old Testament literature.

When Colenso began to write about the Hexateuch a careful scrutiny of its contents had led to their decomposition into three great documents, of equal importance but unequal extent. Of these the easiest to isolate, the most readily recognisable as an independent whole, is Deuteronomy, or rather that portion

Reviews" as a contribution to materialism' (p. 389). And finally, Buckle is accused of holding that 'the acquisition of scientific truth has been the sole cause of human progress by redeeming the mind from error, which he considers to be exclusively theological' (p. 407). Did Buckle call economical protectionism a theological error?

[1] Cheyne's 'Founders of Old Testament Criticism,' p. 196.

of Deuteronomy which consists of a long address supposed to be delivered by Moses to the assembled Israelites at the end of their forty years' wandering in the wilderness. In the symbolic notation now employed by critics this document is distinguished as D.

Another division is supplied, in the first instance, by the mass of laws and ritualistic prescriptions which fill the latter part of Exodus, the whole of Leviticus, and the greater part of Numbers. These enactments are accompanied by a narrative, evidently drawn up by the same writer (or school of writers), and presenting certain peculiarities of style which the Hebrew scholar recognises at a glance, and which even those who are not Hebraists can be taught to recognise without any difficulty in a good translation. A further examination reveals the very interesting fact that various portions of Genesis, beginning with the account of the creation in six days, come from the same hand. When extracted and pieced together these sections form a complete narrative, furnishing a historical introduction to the Levitical legislation, and continued, with large interpolations, through the Book of Joshua. Taken together, the narrative and the laws form the backbone of the Hexateuch as we have it. Hence this portion used to be known among critics as the Grundschrift, or fundamental document, and was supposed to be the oldest of all, the framework into which later additions were inserted. From its connexion with the priestly legislation it is now designated as P.

A distinguishing peculiarity in the earlier or prae-Mosaic narratives of the Grundschrift, is that they always express the divine name by the Hebrew word Elohim, translated in our version as God, never by the word Jehovah, or, as we now write it, Iahveh, under the idea that the latter was unknown to the patriarchs and was first revealed to Moses in the burning bush. Other parts of Genesis, on the contrary, mention Iahveh with the utmost freedom, and one passage even states that God was invoked under that name in the time of Seth the son of Adam. Ever since this distinction was pointed out by Astruc in the middle of the eighteenth century, it has been reasonably inferred that these sections are due to another writer, formerly known as the Jehovist, who did not know, or did not accept, the story of the burning bush. Many of the narratives in Genesis are

from his hand, and it may also be traced in the later books. In the earlier stages of Biblical criticism he was supposed to have come after the Elohist or author of the 'fundamental document,' and this was the theory adopted by Colenso in particular.

The whole critical school agreed in identifying D with the Book of the Law, alleged to have been discovered, and certainly first put in practice, under Josiah. Opinions differed as to whether it was composed for the occasion, or had been in existence for some time previously; but none placed it earlier than Hezekiah. From considerations of style, Colenso ascribed it with confidence to the prophet Jeremiah; but this opinion has not found favour with subsequent critics. On far less plausible grounds he sought to identify the Elohist with Samuel. Most of his contemporaries put the Elohist later, but not later than Solomon, and in any case before the Jehovist. Thus the recognised order of stratification was, first the Elohistic document or Grundschrift, second the Jehovist, and last the Deuteronomic legislation; or in symbols, E, J, D.

Such was the state of critical opinion when Colenso's first part appeared. His arithmetical arguments were pooh-poohed by Bishop Wilberforce as containing no more than what every one knew to be false, and by Matthew Arnold, as containing no more than what every one—who counted—knew to be true. Far different was their effect on Prof. Kuenen of Leyden, a scholar second to none among the Biblical critics of the age. He knew, of course, that the Pentateuch was partly unhistorical, that it abounded in merely legendary or exaggerated stories. But he believed that it embodied a certain amount of historical truth, and that this was to be looked for chiefly in the Grundschrift as the oldest and therefore presumably the most trustworthy portion of all. To his great surprise, however, he found that Colenso's criticism—which he calls 'simply annihilating'—bore exclusively on this portion, a circumstance the more remarkable because it was quite undesigned, the attack having been made without any consciousness that it told against one document in the Pentateuch more than against another.

What lay at the root of the whole difficulty, or rather impossibility, was the statement that the Israelites whom Moses led out of Egypt numbered 600,000 fighting men. The figure had long been looked on as highly improbable, but

Kuenen had been disposed to pass it over as a mere hyperbole, a legendary exaggeration. But this evasion seemed no longer possible in face of the fact, to which Colenso drew attention, that it works out as the sum-total of two distinct census-lists, giving the numbers of each tribe in exact detail and with almost precise agreement between their results. In this instance we have to deal not with exaggeration but with downright fiction. And the responsibility for that fiction falls on the writer who laid especial claim to our belief by the precision and apparent authenticity of his information. Aided by suggestions from other quarters, Kuenen began to follow up the line of thought thus opened; and not many years were over before he had convinced himself that the whole Levitical Code is of post-exilian origin, accepting also the inevitable corollary that the introductory narrative in Genesis is part and parcel of the same vast fabrication.[1] The date of Deuteronomy remained relatively fixed, and served as a pivot on which the whole investigation revolved, the moot-point being solely whether it was preceded or followed by the composition of the Elohistic document whose credibility had been destroyed by Colenso. And the great majority of competent authorities, with Wellhausen at their head, are now agreed in assigning it to the later date, a date which at once accounts for the total ignorance of history and disregard of verisimilitude displayed by its author—qualities displayed also, and to an even greater extent, by the priestly Chronicler of a still later date.

In the attack on Colenso, already more than once referred to, Matthew Arnold laid down the somewhat arbitrary rule that no such work as the Bishop's should be written unless it were calculated either to 'inform the instructed or to edify the uninstructed.' We have seen how in this instance even the most highly instructed had something to learn from the fresh treatment of an old theme. As to edification, it is hard to determine whether or not so undefinable a boon has been conferred. But if, as we may suppose, it is promoted by the removal of a crying scandal, then the religious public must have been edified to learn that the wholesale massacres by which the

[1] Colenso's 'Examination,' Part VI., p. xxxii.; Bleek, 'Einleitung in das Alte Testament,' edited by Wellhausen, pp. 153 ff.; Cheyne's 'Founders of Old Testament Criticism,' pp. 201–2.

Israelitish conquest of Palestine was formerly believed to have been accompanied, were certainly not commanded by the Author of the Decalogue, and were probably imagined by a sanguinary priesthood as a peculiar exercise of that idealising faculty with which it is now the fashion among theologians to credit them.

An attempt to oust Colenso from the bishopric which he had so nobly administered in the interest of the helpless natives, was defeated by the intervention of the lay authorities at home. In this instance the failure of persecuting bigots to suppress the free exercise of reason was due to legal technicalities, of which the ecclesiastics at Capetown were ignorant, not, as in the case of 'Essays and Reviews,' to an unexpected reinterpretation of the obligations imposed on clergymen by their ordination vows. Still, but for the judgment of the Court of Arches granting unlimited liberty to Biblical criticism, Colenso might have felt himself obliged to resign his see before publishing his Examination. Nothing could well have given more immediate emphasis to Dr. Lushington's decision than the appearance of that work, as nothing could more thoroughly discredit Pusey's protest in favour of Biblical infallibility than what Kuenen called the imperturbable tranquillity with which its annihilating demonstrations were put forth, and the applause with which they were greeted by the laity of England. That applause was amply merited by the Bishop's own honesty and courage. But at the same time the laity must have felt that his cause, and the cause of the Essayists, was theirs also; and that the great movement in secular philosophy and science which had succeeded to the apathy of a former generation, could not be carried to a successful issue until the paralysing weight of popular superstition had been removed or lightened. And this movement in its turn had no doubt been helping to create a new public opinion, officially expressed in the legal decisions, equivalent to legislative enactments, by which enquiry within the Church had been enabled to enter on a new career.

We have now to pass in review the series of extraordinary works, accompanying and sustaining the religious revolt, by which England, after her long abdication of the proud position won for her under the Stuart dynasty, was raised once more to the intellectual leadership of Europe.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DELIVERANCE OF SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

CONTINENTAL critics have sometimes taunted Englishmen with their neglect of general ideas; and some English writers have accepted the charge as a thing to be rather proud of than otherwise, as a homage to the practical tendencies, the good sense of the nation, its desire to cultivate knowledge only in so far as knowledge subserves the ends of life, those ends being understood as material progress and moral improvement. Now there certainly are large sections of English society in which this view prevails, and there may have been times when public opinion at large received its tone from them. But the same might be said of France and Germany: it might even have been said of ancient Athens with more plausibility than is generally supposed. And some observers, not prejudiced in favour of our country, have at various times expressed themselves in an opposite sense. It is an often quoted saying of Hegel's that in England barometers and thermometers are called philosophical instruments; and the remark is invariably referred to as if it were intended for nothing but a contemptuous sarcasm. There is, of course, a humorous side to such nomenclature, which Hegel, with his keen sense of humour, is not likely to have missed. But on reading the whole passage where the reference occurs we find that, so far from disparaging England, he is quoting the English use of terms as highly complimentary to philosophy, and indirectly as a wholesome lesson to Germany. According to him, philosophy cannot but gain by being associated, if only in name, with so esteemed a pursuit as physical science. And he mentions with still more satisfaction how Canning had recently congratulated his countrymen for applying philosophical principles to the administration of the

State; 'so there at least philosophy is not a nickname'—as it seems to have been in Germany.[1]

Other testimonies to the same effect from La Fontaine to 'Gyp,' and from Schopenhauer to Odysse Barot, might be quoted. But for the present Hegel may suffice, and the more so that his references suggest an important observation, which is the close connexion obtaining in England of philosophy both with science and with practical politics. The greatest English scientific discoverers and statesmen have been distinguished for their breadth of view, the greatest English thinkers have been distinguished for their keen interest in the application of ideas to life. As there are not, relatively speaking, any closed circles in our society, so in the intellectual sphere our aims and studies tend to overlap, intermix, and fertilise each other by the mutual communication of their peculiar principles and methods. Nowhere else has amateur work been so abundant or of such admirable quality, its excellence being due precisely to the freshness and originality of those who bring new points of view with them from their former studies, and start on their new enquiries untrammelled by professional routine.

It may not perhaps be entirely fanciful if we bring this fact of free exchange, reciprocity, correlation, and circulation, so characteristic of English habits, and indeed the fundamental form of English life, into connexion with the leading discoveries and ideas of English science. At its very beginning with Gilbert, there is the conception of magnetism as a reciprocal attraction between the poles of the needle and the poles of the earth, as also between the earth and the moon. His greater contemporary, Harvey, carries the notion of circulation from astronomical to physiological phenomena, and the notion of genesis from an egg, from some orders to all orders of living beings.[2] Both in Newton's third law of motion and in his law of gravitation we find the double note of reciprocity and universality. Then when English science, after a long pause, resumes its activity, we find the characteristic note struck once more in Dalton's theory of chemical equivalents; while Davy brings electricity into fruitful contact with chemistry, and Young elucidates the laws of light by the laws of sound.

[1] 'Geschichte der Philosophie,' Vol. I., p. 73 (first ed.).

[2] 'Omne vivum ex ovo.'

Davy's successor, Faraday, establishes the perfect reciprocity of electricity and magnetism, before him only known to be related as cause and effect, and discovers the magnetisation of light, being led to seek for it by philosophical principles. Finally, on the basis of his enquiries, Joule and Grove build up the supreme generalisation of the conservation of energy, originally formulated by Grove—himself, be it observed, a scientific amateur—under the characteristically English title of the 'Correlation of the Physical Forces.' That energy never comes into existence and never perishes was a truth first formulated in Germany; and I have no wish to detract from the glory of its original discoverers. But the fact remains that the same truth was independently reached by English philosophers[1]—we may be permitted on Hegel's authority to call them so this once—and my point is that by whatever train of thought Mohr and Mayer may have been guided, in this country it falls into line with the habitual direction of the national genius.

Of all scientific truths none is so intrinsically adverse to theology as the conservation of energy; and no careful theologian has ever consented to allow it more than a strictly limited and provisional validity. But the hostility has never assumed an acute or popular form. Grove's lectures, which appeared almost simultaneously with the 'Vestiges,' excited no scandal in religious circles, and indeed remained long unnoticed by the general public. To recognise force as a conception distinct from matter, and equally capable of quantitative estimation, required a considerable effort of thought; but when this conception had been mastered the indestructibility of force was at once classed with the indestructibility of matter, and seemed not more incompatible with the existence or the recognised attributes of God. A Power capable of creating or destroying the one would be equally capable of creating or destroying the other; and indeed Joule himself attributed the

[1] 'Humanly speaking neither matter nor force can be created' (Grove's 'Correlation of the Physical Forces,' p. 50, first ed.). 'When we collect the dissipated and changed forces, and reconvert them, the initial motion, affecting the same amount of matter with the same velocity should be reproduced' (*ib.* p. 47). 'The same principles and modes of reasoning might be applied to the organic, as well as to the inorganic world' (*ib.* p. 49).

indestructibility of the grand agents of nature to the Creator's fiat.[1]

Difficulties first arose when the new law was extended from unconscious to conscious energies, or, in more popular language, from matter to mind. It was ascertained first of all that the discharge of vital functions necessitated a corresponding expenditure of force, represented by the consumption of so much muscular and nervous tissue, answering to the burning of fuel in a steam-engine; and the exercise of thought and feeling was soon made similarly dependent on the liberation of energy stored up in the highly unstable molecules of the brain. All this, however, only amounted to a restatement in more precise terms of what had long been admitted, namely, that in our present life mental manifestations somehow and to some extent depended on physical activities. It still remained possible to assume that in other lives the soul would be provided with a different substratum, or would be enabled to preserve the consciousness of its identity without any such extraneous support. It was also possible to maintain, and difficult to disprove, that even in this life the highest faculties worked independently of physical energies.

Such evasions were no longer possible when the question of freewill came up for reconsideration in the light of the new scientific theories. Moral determinations ultimately manifest themselves under the form of particular muscular contractions; and to say that these are started by a free volition, understanding freedom in a metaphysical sense, is to imply that energy can be either created or destroyed. Careless or ill-informed thinkers might attempt to get over the difficulty by explaining that what the will did was not to create energy but to change the direction in which energy was applied. Such a reconciliation between science and the common belief had in fact been adopted by Descartes, but has become untenable since Leibniz showed that the direction of motion cannot be altered without the application of a new force to the moving body. Speaking generally, the transformations of energy are no less inevitably determined than the course run by each of its particular phases.

Some feeble folk next suggested the idea of an infinitesimal disturbance as practically sufficient for the claims of moral

[1] 'Dictionary of National Biography,' Vol. XXX., p. 210.

freedom; thus laying themselves open to a facetious reminder of the excuse offered for an unauthorised baby by its mother in one of Marryat's novels. The bolder spirits took a different course. Frankly acknowledging, or rather insisting on the miraculous character of freewill, they argued from its reality to the creative power of volition, and to the priority of volition over material energy. As this can be produced on a small scale by the human will, the inference—according to them—was irresistible that the whole energy of nature owed its origin to an infinite Will. And on this point they could appeal to the high scientific authority of Dr. Carpenter, who, after doing more than any other physiologist to establish the correlation of mental and physical energy, still remained a convinced and even vehement supporter of freewill.

Later developments of scientific thought introduced an additional complication into the question by starting the doctrine of what is called human automatism. But this must be reserved for a subsequent stage of our exposition. At present we are concerned only with the general aspects of conservation in its bearing on religious belief. In this connexion it is important to distinguish between the particular applications of a new doctrine to this or that religious belief, and the general pressure, vague but voluminous, exercised by it on the minds of men. Many who would have found themselves hard set to distinguish and define the various conceptions involved in such phrases as the correlation of the physical forces or the conservation of energy, still carried away with them from the lecture-room or the popular scientific article a very vivid impression of the universe as something self-existent and self-supporting, in which nothing was created and nothing lost, without beginning and without end. The law of universal causation, made so familiar to the educated classes by Mill's 'Logic,' acquired a new precision when translated into the language of a more exact philosophy, which represented each successive state of the universe as the dynamic equivalent of the state which had preceded and of the state which would follow it. This new interpretation also went to discredit the idea of a First Cause. In point of fact that idea had never been a necessity of thought, or at least not since Galileo had shown that movement may go on for ever without the help of an eternal motor. But in the

popular imagination it had long survived the fall of Aristotle's physics, and still continued to do duty among the standing arguments for theism, until the rise of the new doctrine, according to which nothing is first or last in the endless transformation of energy.

Another aspect of the conservation of energy in reference to the older view remains to be considered. With the acceptance of force and matter as practically eternal, other eternities disappeared. Until then it had been believed that the sun was an inexhaustible source of light and heat, that his power of illuminating and warming the planets, like his power of holding them in their orbits, was inherent and unfailing. A popular lecturer could speak of the stellar radiance as a wondrous blaze which would burn on for ever. Such dreams were now irrevocably dissipated; for solar energy turned out to be not less perishable, though of longer duration than any earthly lamp or fire. Just as the attribute of indestructibility had long before been transferred by Greek thought from the great visible masses of matter, from the 'everlasting hills' to the minutest particles of which they are composed, so now the same attribute passed from the huge cosmic sources of accumulated energy to the infinitesimal vibrations of which that energy consists. Such a change must have struck at least a few thinking minds as closely akin to the democratic revolution by which political authority was being simultaneously transferred from kings and statesmen to fluctuating masses of public opinion. The sun and stars had once been worshipped as immortal gods. When deposed from that dignity they had still furnished standing illustrations for the eternal power and splendour of the absolute Spirit who had succeeded to their honours. How if they were also destined to illustrate his fall, and the devolution of his majesty to the immense aggregate of living energies whose totality alone is immortal and supreme?

Suggestive as was the doctrine of conservation, its full philosophic import did not win recognition until it had been brought into fertilising contact with the theory of organic evolution. Sir William Grove, the author of the 'Correlation of the Physical Forces,' happily combined the two ideas under the category of Continuity—the title of his Presidential Address

to the British Association at Nottingham in 1866. Continuity indeed expresses far more perfectly than evolution the guiding idea of modern speculation, and enables us to grasp with more thoroughness the links by which its varied and widely divergent activities are mutually sustained and completed. For evolution, after all, cannot be freed from a certain teleological implication. We think of it as moving towards a predetermined end, as constantly directed from without. And even those who succeed in eliminating such associations are met by the fact that, on any definition, evolution as a cosmic process is neither universal, nor uninterrupted, nor unending. There are aggregates whose condition, within the limits of our observation, remains unchanged; there are others in a state of retrograde metamorphosis or dissolution; and there are periods in the life of a developing organism when such phases seem for a time to interfere with the normal processes of growth. But always and everywhere there is continuity between the successive states; and even the coexistent states of distinct aggregates, although they cannot be proved to form such an unbroken chain as Leibniz supposed, are still connected by more links than would appear to a superficial observer. And while there is room for very wide disagreement between thinkers of different schools as to what constitutes evolution, one denouncing as symptomatic of decay and death what another hails as the dawn of a brighter era, all who are imbued with the philosophical spirit will unite in recommending a vigilant study of small beginnings and almost imperceptible transitions, as the very method of nature, and the key to her most momentous transformations.

Evolution is often spoken of as a solvent of theology. Nevertheless, theologians who wish to reconcile themselves with the scientific spirit have not been slow to adopt the language of evolutionary philosophy, and to apply it for their own purposes. They would find continuity a more dangerous enemy, except just in so far as evolution is a particular application of its methods to the criticism of their pretensions. For the hard and fast divisions, abrupt contrasts, and summary alternatives of theology, or at least of Christian and Catholic theology, are essentially incompatible with a philosophy which is ever refining on differences and resemblances; connecting points the remotest in space and time; softening down antithetical

qualities, or filling up the interval between them by a series of insensible transitions; interpolating more and more links in the chain of causal sequence; building up enormous forces from an accumulation of infinitesimal momenta, and dissolving them again into their minute component parts. Such impassable, or all but impassable distinctions as the Church draws between herself and the world, spirit and matter, God and nature, miracles and law, this life and the next, the saved and the lost, the state of grace and the state of sin, cannot live in the mental condition engendered by such habits. Continuity will be invoked to disguise the retreat it has imposed; but the fact will remain that the positions it has undermined have been abandoned.

The mention of Leibniz may serve to remind us that the idea of continuity is more German, and we may perhaps add Scotch, than English. At any rate, it chiefly impressed itself on the English mind under the form of evolution, and came into conflict with religious belief as an evolutionary philosophy, to the study of which, in so far as it bears on the history of rationalism, we have now to turn our attention.

It is a familiar fact, made known to us by the great naturalist himself, that Darwin's explanation of the origin of species by natural selection through the competition of different varieties for the means of existence, was suggested by the Malthusian law of population. Malthus had taught that more human beings are born into the world than there is food to maintain, and that however much may be added to the produce of the soil, the multiplication of the species will go on at a still higher rate of increase. How far this is true, or will always remain true of reasonable beings with a certain power of self-restraint, may be doubted. But it is true to a great extent of the human race, and true without exception of all other living species, animal and vegetal. Darwin gave the law this wide extension, inferring at the same time that the law of competition, rightly or wrongly assumed by the English political economists to be the regulating principle in commercial transactions between man and man, is that which has ultimately determined the survival or extinction of individuals, varieties, and species in the battle-fields of nature,

through the whole extent of geological time. Whatever may happen in higher spheres, there at least the race is to the swift and the battle to the strong. Finally, from these unquestionable facts he drew the momentous inference that any accidental variation conferring an advantage on its possessor in the struggle for existence, may be so increased in successive generations of favoured individuals as to result at last in the constitution of a new species.

Such in its barest outline is the celebrated theory of natural selection, the relation of which to religious belief will duly come up for examination hereafter. So far we are on familiar ground; and therefore a very summary indication of the facts will suffice. It is also well known that the same theory was struck out by Mr. A. R. Wallace simultaneously with Darwin, and in complete independence of his researches. But now comes the very interesting and, so far, rather neglected fact that Mr. Wallace, like his great compeer, was led to this vein of thought by studying the Malthusian law of population, the most striking difference between their intellectual antecedents being that the notion of evolution came to him in a literary way by reading the 'Vestiges,' whereas it had been suggested to Darwin by direct observation of nature, by noticing the striking generic resemblance between the living flora and fauna of South America and the fossil remains of its inhabitants in the preceding geological period.

Nor is this all. The philosopher who more than any other has identified his name with evolution, and has applied its methods with the greatest breadth of view and fulness of detail to all orders of phenomena—I mean, of course, Herbert Spencer—also took the law of population as the starting-point of his enquiries. It seemed to him incredible that the primary instinct of reproduction should so operate as to defeat man's obvious destiny on earth, the attainment of perfection and happiness by complete adaptation to the conditions of existence. But what if the pressure of population on the means of subsistence should turn out to be itself the chief means to that end? Hunger and love are, as Schiller says, the springs by which the machinery of life is driven round, and they are also, according to Spencer, the springs of progress. Man's intellectual and practical energies are stimulated to the utmost by the

necessity of providing for his ever-increasing numbers; the inborn powers of the brain are continually developed by the exertions thus imposed; and as the power and size of the brain go on increasing, the power of reproduction is diminished to an equal extent. Now, this process is bound to continue until an equilibrium has been established, that is to say, until the race reaches a point at which the reproductive power shall be just sufficient to keep up its numbers without a surplus and without a deficit. Intellectual and industrial progress will cease with the withdrawal of the stimulus to which they owe their origin; but also there will be no need for any further improvement when perfect adaptation to the conditions of life has been achieved.

Herbert Spencer saw in the pressure of population on the means of subsistence an agency for the progressive development of the human race, and even got so far as to point out, before Darwin, that it works in part by securing the survival of the fittest. 'For as those who are prematurely carried off must in the average of cases be those in whom the power of self-preservation is the least, it unavoidably follows that those left behind to continue the race must be those in whom the power of self-preservation is greatest—must be the select of their generation. So that whether the dangers to existence be of the kind produced by excess of fertility or of any other kind, it is clear that by the ceaseless exercise of the faculties needed to contend with them successfully, there is ensured a constant progress toward a higher degree of skill, intelligence, and self-regulation—a better co-ordination of actions—a more complete life.'[1]

This, as Spencer himself has pointed out, comes very near Darwin's generalisation without reaching it. For, to use his own words, 'though the process of natural selection is recognised . . . there is no implication that it has anything to do with the origin of species.' There is no 'suspicion of the enormous range of its effects, or of the conditions under which a large part of its effects are produced.'[2] Spencer, as a moral philosopher, was indeed so absorbed in questions relating to the welfare of the human race, that we can well understand

[1] 'Principles of Biology,' Vol. II., pp. 528–9.
[2] *Ibid.*

his overlooking what to Darwin and Wallace, as naturalists, was particularly obvious. We shall see, when the time comes to review it, that in his general theory of evolution also the ideas of the English economists, and more especially of Bentham's school, were throughout the determining factors. And the same remark applies, though in a less degree, to Buckle's philosophy of history. After having been driven into the background for a time by the religious revival, Benthamite ideas were again coming to the front with the decline of religious influences, and, in full accordance with the trend of English genius, were entering into fruitful combination with the physical and historical studies of the new age.

After long passing for a powerful solvent of theological beliefs, the doctrine of evolution has now come to be celebrated as theology's best friend. Spiritual-mindedness is not incompatible with devotion to the powers that be; and success is worshipped as sedulously in the churches as anywhere else. In studying history, however, we cannot fail to observe that the alleged love was long dissembled or left to dwell among the rocks; and that evolutionary ideas could only gain a hearing when rationalistic criticism, joined to internal dissensions, had largely sapped the energies of their future ally, but formerly, to all appearances, their irreconcilable enemy. In the historical sketch prefixed to the later editions of his 'Origin of Species' Darwin enumerates no fewer than thirty-four authors who, independently of his teaching, 'believed in the modification of species, or at least disbelieved in separate acts of creation,'—some of them even holding that the modification was effected by natural selection.[1] Yet transformism seems to have made no way since the end of the eighteenth century. It may be admitted that some very eminent persons, otherwise fairly emancipated from theological prejudices, cherished an insuperable dislike for the doctrine of man's simian descent. Carlyle, Max Müller, and even Sir Charles Lyell, may be mentioned among the number. But it is

[1] Darwin erroneously counts Aristotle among the latter. Aristotle only quotes, in order to show its absurdity, a certain very crude theory of natural selection, originally derived from Empedocles and subsequently repeated by Lucretius.

certain that in nearly every instance theological prejudice was responsible for the prejudice against evolution. The outcry against the 'Vestiges' would alone suffice to prove this state of feeling. At least one distinguished naturalist, who in private made no secret of his adhesion to the new views, was prevented from declaring himself openly in their favour by dread of what he thought was the state of public opinion. Richard Owen had 'no doubt in his own mind of the upward development of all species;' but thought it 'not yet capable of being scientifically proved;' and was very angry with Darwin for 'rushing prematurely in the face of the bigoted and unprepared public.' Natural selection, although at present no more than a guess, in his opinion 'deserved a thorough investigation.' Spontaneous generation he regarded as 'morally certain, though hardly yet sufficiently proved.' Yet he who so expressed himself had just been attacking the 'Origin of Species' in the 'Edinburgh,' and was believed by Darwin to have inspired the Bishop of Oxford's hostile notice in the 'Quarterly.'

Owen reaped no advantage, but, on the contrary, much discredit from his time-serving treachery. But if his official attitude does not show what people then believed, it shows what they were believed to believe, and would have really believed had not the attack on supernaturalism then in progress for some twenty years been steadily undermining their theological convictions.

Further evidence, if any be needed, of the antagonism subsisting between religious orthodoxy, as then constituted, and evolutionary views, will be found in the religious opinions of the pioneers themselves and of their opponents. Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley were avowed agnostics, Wallace apparently not a believer in the Christian revelation, Baden Powell an unsparing critic of miracles; while Dr. Carpenter, whose acceptance of Darwin's views is described as 'somewhat limited and reserved,' was a Unitarian.[1] On the other hand, some liberal Churchmen refused them even this grudging adhesion. Westcott could see no facts which supported natural selection—or apparently any other theory of organic evolution—and

[1] 'Dictionary of National Biography,' Vol. IX., p. 168. Lyell also seems to have been to some extent a Unitarian.

hoped that Owen was of the same opinion.[1] Sedgwick did not use such very strong language about the 'Origin of Species' as about the 'Vestiges,' but evidently did not hate it any the less; and the Duke of Argyll, a liberal Presbyterian, pursued Darwinism through life with unscrupulous animosity.

Finally, it has to be noted that the founders of evolutionism were placed by their social position above or outside the necessity of conciliating popular favour. Darwin was a gentleman of independent means, living in studious retirement. Herbert Spencer possessed small but sufficient private means, and was always quite indifferent to what people thought about his opinions or himself.[2] To all appearance Mr. Wallace has been equally unfettered. Huxley had a safe tenure of his London professorship. Yet, as it was, Darwin kept back his special views about the descent of man for twelve years subsequent to the publication of his first great work, from regard, as it is supposed, for the susceptibilities of the English public; and Sir Charles Lyell, who was equally safe from persecution, showed a somewhat similar reticence where there was any risk of offending theological prejudices. I may here be permitted to repeat more fully what has been already mentioned on a former occasion. In his work on 'The Antiquity of Man' the great geologist brings together all the evidence available at the time (1863) for proving that our race has inhabited the earth for a period considerably longer than even the most adroit manipulation of Biblical chronology would permit. 'But,' says Alexander Bain, 'knowing the dangers of his footing, he abstained from giving an estimate of the extension of time required by his evidences of human remains. Society in London, however, would not put up with that reticence, and he had to disclose at dinner-parties what he had withheld from the public—namely,—that, in his opinion, the duration of man could not be less than fifty thousand years.'[3]

Both questions, that which related to man's origin, and that which related to his antiquity, were chiefly looked at

[1] 'Life and Letters of Fenton Hort,' Vol. I., pp. 431–2.

[2] This, of course, does not exclude extreme sensitiveness to argumentative attacks on his philosophy.

[3] Bain's 'Practical Essays,' p. 275.

in reference to the narratives in Genesis, and the danger apprehended was from the upholders of Biblical infallibility. In reality they struck much deeper; but the wider bearings of the new views on all religion were hardly appreciated by the general public then, and perhaps are not fully appreciated even now. What the facts just related prove is that while a greatly increased measure of freedom was already granted to scientific speculation in the early sixties, still that freedom fell considerably short of what it became in the next decade. And if this be admitted, we have to ask ourselves how the increasing emancipation was effected.

In my opinion so great a change cannot be explained as resulting from the irresistible growth of science itself, seeing that the facts already known were amply sufficient to warrant the extreme inferences privately put upon them by Darwin and Lyell, while it can be very largely explained by the liberating action of rationalistic criticism as exhibited in the foregoing chapters. To any one who compares the lingering timidity of those two eminent discoverers with the aggressive and outspoken tone taken by Huxley, Tyndall, and Clifford not many years later, it will, I think, be clear that the judgments of the Court of Arches and of the Privy Council, followed up by Colenso's destructive attack on the Pentateuch, effected no less for the emancipation of the laity than for that of the clergy—always with the reservation that Dr. Lushington and Lord Westbury, in creating those decisive precedents, were themselves carrying out the mandate of a vast constituency who wished to be rid of superstition, but hesitated to throw it off without the sanction of the constituted authorities. In such complex movements, where the forces engaged are continually acting and reacting on one another, it is difficult to determine the exact share due to each element; and others of a still wider denomination may have to be counted in as we proceed. But as a matter of justice, it is important that the services which are habitually slighted or forgotten should for once receive the full credit they deserve.

If the human race was evolved from some lower species of animals, simian or otherwise, then the story of its origin, hitherto accepted as an integral part of the reigning religious

belief, must be rejected as erroneous. As we know, it is possible, in terms, to hold both views at the same time, but only at the expense of admitting that theological terms, at any rate, have no meaning in particular, and may be so stretched as to tolerate mutually contradictory interpretations with equal facility. But Darwinism is much more than a destructive criticism on Biblical religion; its corrosive action extends to the natural religion on which Christianity, since the second century, has been based by its apologists. I now proceed to examine the theory under this other and more important aspect of its philosophical significance.

At the risk of repeating what every one is supposed to know, but what many are apt to forget, I must recall the fact that Darwin neither founded evolution nor gave the principle a wider application than it had previously possessed. Among all the century's great thinkers his intellect seems to have had the narrowest range. He wrote as a naturalist, wisely limiting himself to the field of natural history where he reigned supreme. Now, it was just in this domain, since become their most triumphant theatre, that evolutionary ideas encountered the most obstinate resistance. The planetary system, the earth's crust, the mind of man, universal history, religions, philosophies, arts, institutions—all were believed to be subjects of development, and were treated with more or less success on the genetic method. But with the exception of embryology, where of course method and subject were identical, the biological sciences proved absolutely refractory. That one animal or vegetal species ever was or ever could be evolved out of another seemed as much a dream as the transmutation of the chemical elements. History presented no example of such an event; and those who maintained that what had not occurred during the relatively brief period of man's recorded existence on earth might still have been effected in the countless ages of geological time, were met by the triumphant challenge to produce the links between living and extinct species, some relics of which one must suppose to have been preserved in the more recent fossiliferous strata. There was a gap in the chain of universal causation which Laplace and Mill had ignored.

On this one field the usual relations between theology and what the theologians called materialism seemed exactly reversed.

While those who clung to their belief in uninterrupted causation could only cherish the unshaken faith and hope that the all-sufficiency of natural law would yet be vindicated by some new and unimagined scientific revelation, the advocates of supernatural intervention were claiming the whole range of organic science as supplying vast and varied evidence, amounting to complete demonstration, that organised bodies were the work of an omnipotent intelligence, and could not possibly have originated in any other way. Every single species was the result of a separate creative act, of a distinct miracle, and could not be conceived as anything else. Those who held this view claimed to be the true inductive philosophers, the modern Baconians. Their opponents were the fanatical theorists, the revivers of pagan superstition.

The essential fallacy of this reasoning had long before been exposed by Hume; and already before Darwin, Baden Powell and Jowett had begun to point out that teleology was but a rotten support for theism. Such abstract considerations, however, had little weight with the vulgar, whose faith, when it was shaken at all, was only shaken by the existence of so much evil in the world. The argument from final causes must indeed have extraordinary plausibility since so vigorous a thinker as Mill could uphold it to the last. But for less biassed understandings the theory of natural selection, taken in conjunction with Hume's 'Dialogues on Natural Religion,' has completed its overthrow.

Darwin's contributions to evolutionism fall into two quite distinct parts, but in his own exposition they are so interwoven that some attention is needed to keep them logically asunder. A more practised writer, a controversialist by training or instinct like Herbert Spencer, Baden Powell, or Huxley, would probably have begun by putting forward the arguments for organic evolution in general. After establishing this as a fact, he would have gone on to the consideration of its possible cause, suggesting natural selection as either sufficient in itself, or else in combination with other agencies, for the creation of new species. And he would have concluded by marshalling whatever evidence was then available for this alleged discovery, and indicating the lines along which fresh evidence of its reality must be sought. Or he might have treated the question

historically, describing the various attempts at its solution already made in their order, fixing the point at which it had arrived when he began to write, and finally detailing his own theory of how species originated.

Darwin follows neither course. Assuming, one would say, that organic evolution was a generally recognised fact, he begins by showing how artificial selection has created varieties of pigeons almost indistinguishable from natural species. Then follow those immortal chapters in which it is argued that the struggle for existence, as an *a priori* necessity of nature, must have precisely the same effect in picking out the individuals best adapted to their environment for the exclusive propagation of the race, repeating the process in each successive generation, and thus accumulating minute accidental variations until they amount to a new specific character. After that the exposition proceeds without any particular method, meeting supposed objections, suggesting fresh arguments for natural selection, and winding up with a summary of the evidence in favour of evolution in general and against the theory of special creation—the only theory contemplated as likely to be put into competition with his own.

It may be urged that, whether logically good or bad, Darwin's method had at any rate the merit of success. But we must remember that many circumstances combined in his favour. The educated public were longing, I will not say for evolution—it was there—but for the removal of the one apparent exception to its universality, just as they were longing for the unification of Italy and of Germany, for the abolition of North American slavery, for the restoration of Poland, for complete free trade, for symmetry and simplicity all round. Men of business liked the new theory because it harmonised with their old theory of open competition as the best guarantee for good workmanship, of prizes for efficiency, of the wall for the weakest. Men and women of advanced religious opinions welcomed what seemed to promise the greatest victory ever yet won by science over theology. And finally, if Darwin was no rhetorician himself, he found very lucid and powerful exponents of his views in Huxley, Spencer, and Haeckel; who also, from their vast knowledge of the subject, carried an authority nearly equal to his own. Haeckel

too brought with him the enthusiastic support of Germany, always a factor of first-rate importance—I may even say a decisive factor—in fixing the speculative opinions of England.

All this combination of circumstances, however, went to create a misapprehension which, in spite of many attempts to rectify it, still survives for the confusion of history. Darwin passes with many not only for the discoverer of natural selection, which he practically was, but also for what he certainly was not, for the discoverer of evolution in general. And although the most candid and modest of men, he is, to some extent, responsible for this misapprehension through his most unmethodical style of exposition. Nor was that the only reason. Distinct as were the two ideas, it was natural enough that he and others should identify the general theory of transformism with the new explanation of it offered in the 'Origin of Species.' For no other explanation worthy of the name had as yet appeared; and this, in fact, was the chief reason why men of science on whom theological prejudices had no influence still maintained a sceptical attitude towards the hypothesis of organic development. Since then a more rational point of view has been attained; and the logical correctness is now generally recognised of believing that different species, or even genera, orders, and so forth, may have sprung from a common ancestral stock, without our undertaking to assign a physical cause for their modification in the lapse of ages; just as physicists accept gravitation without troubling themselves about finding a hypothesis to account for it on mechanical principles. At the same time no one doubts that there is a cause; and most persons who think scientifically would admit that it must be a natural cause, that is, one not necessitating the intervention of a higher intelligence. In this department the triumph of rationalism is complete; and its triumph is chiefly due to Darwin's labours.

It is perfectly possible, as the 'Vestiges' had shown, to be an evolutionist and a good theist at the same time; nay more, to use evolution as a fresh argument in favour of theism. But that is only when the cause assigned for the production of new species is itself an evidence of creative intelligence. Robert Chambers wished his hypothesis to be considered as supplying such evidence, as being in fact what it was in name, a natural

history of creation. According to him, the Creator had so arranged the laws of organised matter that at a certain foreseen period a reptile (let us say) would give birth to a mammal, or an ape to a baby. Theologians disliked the idea of such an ancestress, especially as her intervention seemed inconsistent with the narrative in Genesis; but if the metamorphoses of insects and of amphibians counted among the evidences of design, there seemed to be no reason why this simian prodigy should not be turned to the same purpose in the writings of some future Paley or Chalmers.

No careful reasoner could make that use of natural selection. Darwin struck at the root of all teleology as a theistic argument by reducing it to a particular case of mechanical causation. Not to put too fine a point on it, the manifold utilities of which organised structures are made up had their origin in chance. Under the free play of natural affinities all sorts of combinations are set up, but only those survive which are useful to the individual or to the race. In order to be transmitted they must either contribute to the support of their possessors, or help them to propagate their kind. Thus a false appearance of design is produced where nothing but blind mechanism exists.

This idea of selective preservation had already been turned to account in the warfare between science and theology. Some Greek philosophers, who held that all things resulted from a fortuitous concourse of atoms, tried to explain the apparent purposefulness of living organisms by a similar method applied in a much cruder manner. Infinite atoms coming together through infinite time in an infinite number of ways must, they thought, at last hit off such a world as that in which we live. If we do not see the failures, that is just because they were failures, because they could not maintain themselves against the destructive agencies of nature. But it cannot be doubted that they did once exist in the shape, say, of bodies without heads, and heads without bodies, or with the wrong sort of bodies, as, for instance, a man's head with a bull's body. Mythology preserves the tradition of this and the like monstrosities under the form of minotaurs, centaurs, and the like.

Darwin, too, has his system of lucky throws among a number of unlucky ones; but he vastly reduces the necessary proportion of misses to hits by assuming, to begin with, a

planet where all the conditions of life remain combined through hundreds of millions of years, and the presence on its surface, from some unknown cause, of living organisms, with the power of self-support, self-reproduction, and spontaneous variation. And of these assumptions the first, though since disputed, seemed at that time to rest on satisfactory geological evidence; while the second was a fact behind which he, as a naturalist, was not obliged to go. His theory avowedly left the origin of life as much a mystery as before; it has remained so ever since; and some theologians still appeal to our ignorance on the subject as an argument in favour of their own supernaturalist solution. But the weakness of arguments based on ignorance is becoming more manifest every day. They are liable to be overthrown at any moment by a new discovery in science; and meanwhile they have the disadvantage of being equally available on both sides of the question. We know so little about the possibilities of chemical combination, and about the atmospheric and other conditions prevailing at the earlier stages of terrestrial evolution, that to exclude the possibility of the spontaneous generation of living matter from the number would be no less rash than to include it among them.

Moreover, the theory of natural selection, among other incidental consequences, has had the effect of greatly extending our hopes of what may be done in the way of scientific explanation. For here was a method of hitherto unsuspected power, which, when once brought to bear on the problems of biology, exhibited them in an entirely new light, suggesting an alternative explanation of what had hitherto been attributed to design, utterly fatal to the confident inferences of Paley and his school. Darwin might be right or wrong; but all felt that he was working on truly scientific lines, while the method of his theological opponents appeared by comparison utterly obsolete and illusory. He had won a breathing-space for the development hypothesis, during which it silently passed from a mere surmise to the rank of an acknowledged certainty. And in the inner circles of philosophy he won a similar breathing-space, during which the almost forgotten criticism of Hume has once more been revived and reasserted as against the chimerical pretensions of physical theology.

At this point, however, the issues have not remained so

clear as a rationalist might wish. When the 'Origin of Species' first appeared, it was met by criticisms in which the general theory of development was carefully distinguished from Darwin's particular solution of its difficulties. The blow which natural selection, if established, would inflict on teleology was also recognised; and some biologists were so ingenuous as to refuse their assent to it for that reason, thus supplying an excellent illustration of what I have called intellectual ophelism. Final causes are a useful evidence of God's existence, and therefore we must make believe to find them where the phenomena would be better explained as products of mechanical necessity. In course of time, however, as popular interest became more and more concentrated on evolution itself as an all-pervading process, the question of its cause receded into the background, and theologians eventually persuaded themselves that it was not only reconcilable with the existence of God, but even made that existence more probable than ever, if indeed it did not confirm the Biblical account of man's creation.

Religious belief involves a fancied exchange of attributes between man and the world. It animates that which is not ourselves with a human intelligence and will. It exalts our consciousness to the eternal duration of nature. A consistent theory of evolution threatens both sides of the fundamental equation. What seemed to betoken such purpose and skill in the structure of things need mean no more than the wearing down of a sea-cliff, or the silting of mud from running water, and its subsequent solidification into stratified rock. What claimed a higher origin and destiny than the objects of its own speculation owes its development to the very laws of birth and death which it would defy, and is unintelligible apart from the environment whence it would escape. In England the second aspect of the new philosophy excited more interest and alarm than the first. A truly religious genius, as appeared in the case of Francis Newman, cares infinitely more about the immediate presence of God than about its own chances of survival in happiness or misery hereafter. But the great majority of professed religious believers care infinitely less. For them to be told that they were descended from a brute

meant that they would perish like the brutes. So they listened gladly when able apologists assured them that they were descended from no such discreditable ancestor. That men spoke and apes did not was supposed to settle the question. Language, said Max Müller, was the impassable Rubicon between brutes and men—a rather unfortunate illustration, by the way, as the Rubicon was never more than a conventional frontier, and is chiefly known to history from the circumstance of its having been passed by a soldier of original genius. A more serious objection to thoroughgoing evolutionism has been raised by Mr. Wallace, the joint discoverer of natural selection. This somewhat eccentric thinker has declared that the human mind cannot be accounted for by the accumulation of minute variations in the struggle for existence. Hence there has arisen a tendency to limit the animal descent of man to his body, reserving his mind for a special act of creation or other mysterious origin, bringing it into direct relation with the assumed divine Author of the universe.

Darwin was no great psychologist; and his replies to the objection derived from man's mental constitution are among the least satisfactory portions of his writings. But already, some years before the publication of his theory, this branch of the subject had been taken up by two younger contemporaries, in whom the traditions of Benthamism, or rather of James Mill, were brilliantly revived and extended. These were Alexander Bain and Herbert Spencer, whose epoch-making treatises on 'the Senses and the Intellect' and the 'Principles of Psychology' appeared almost simultaneously in 1855.

About the school to which Bain belonged there never has been any doubt. Thrown at an early age into close association with J. S. Mill and George Grote, he assisted in preparing the 'System of Logic,' and his conversion to positivism is announced in a letter from Mill to Comte, dated 1842. But his adhesion seems to have meant no more than Mill's, if as much. It would imply, above all, the complete abandonment of religious belief, and the complete incorporation of modern science with the philosophy of experience. The young Scotchman's deepest affinities were with James Mill, to whose 'Analysis' his attention was drawn by the younger Mill. Bain agreed with him in treating the principle of Association as the key to all

composite mental phenomena. But he used it with incomparably greater success. James Mill was, above all things, a practical reformer; and the study of mind interested him chiefly through its bearing on educational methods. Now, among the different kinds of association the most useful for educational purposes is what psychologists call association by contiguity. For instance, languages are learned by associating the new word with a familiar idea or with some other word already used by the pupil to denote that idea. History is learned by bringing its events, whether successive or simultaneous, into connexion, so that when one is revived in memory the others are revived along with it. Good habits are acquired and bad habits are unlearned by associating them respectively with pleasurable and painful ideas. And some, of whom Hume was one, have held—what is far more doubtful—that belief consists in the linking together of two conceptions, so that each irresistibly recalls the other. If so, truth would be inculcated and error dispelled by making or breaking the associative bonds in which they consist.

With such interests in view, James Mill gave Contiguous Association far too prominent a place in his analysis of mental phenomena, to the neglect of the much more important process known as Association by Resemblance, which, indeed, he tried to resolve into a particular case of contiguity. In reality it is a more fundamental process than Contiguous Association, which, indeed, can only be brought into play by its aid. That one state of consciousness may recall another with which it has been formerly connected, it must first be revived; and this is only possible when we are reminded of it by its likeness to some present perception or idea; and that is a case of what is called Association by Resemblance, or, more briefly, Identification. For example, if on seeing a friend I recall the circumstances in which we last met, these are not resuscitated by his present appearance, but by the memory-image of him which that appearance has revived.

From his neglect of this other and more important mental law, James Mill totally failed to explain man's reasoning faculty, in which the power of identification plays a foremost part. This great achievement was reserved for his successor, Bain, to whose work on 'the Senses and the Intellect' it

supplies the most interesting and brilliant chapter. His psychology also exhibits mental phenomena in their thoroughgoing connexion with the nervous system, of whose structure and functions it gives a full account. That such a connexion existed had long been admitted in a vague and general way, high mental activity being popularly identified with power of brain; and Hartley in particular had looked for a physiological foundation for the associative processes in the vibrations of nervous threads. But Bain first worked out this idea to systematic completeness by showing how the two kinds of association, contiguity and resemblance, might be supposed to have their basis in the vast structure of cells and conducting fibres which make up the brain and its appendages. As these physiological elements go on accumulating more room is provided for stored-up impressions; as the channels between them are multiplied, impressions formerly associated revive each other with increasing facility; as the same channel is more often traversed, the same or similar impressions are more speedily recognised as such on being repeated.

Nor was this all. Modern physiology has shown that the nervous system constitutes a sensori-motor apparatus in which there is an exact balance of impressions and reactions, so that every afferent current carried inward through the organs of sense to the nerve-centres must ultimately discharge itself by an efferent current through the muscles with which they are connected; the motor current no less than the sensory being accompanied by a distinct mode of consciousness known as the muscular sense, or feeling of central innervation. This fact had been recognised by Thomas Brown and James Mill, who used it to explain the origin of our perception of space, as against those who interpreted the latter as an indivisible and unaccountable act of intuition. Bain accepted this derivation of the space-perception from muscular experiences combined with visual and tactual sensations, placing the whole process in a much clearer light than his predecessors; but he went far beyond them by extending the same principle to the whole range of mental phenomena, thus doing much to break down the old distinction between intellect and will, although he formally recognised it by treating of them separately in two distinct volumes of his systematic work. But in fact intellect

and will as analysed by Bain are seen to be very composite structures, variously made up of sensory and motor experiences; —an advance in psychology comparable to the great anatomical revolution effected by Bichat when he analysed organs into tissues, or, better still, to the decomposition of tissues into cells by Schleiden and Schwann.

The applications of this theory to metaphysics are obvious, and no doubt were made by its author, although his position first as an aspirant to academical promotion, and afterwards as a professor at Aberdeen, would alone have debarred him from drawing attention to them in print. As the highest operations of reason are resolvable into retention, discrimination, and identification, and as these faculties are possessed by many of the lower animals, if not by all, evidently the difference between their mind and the human mind is not one of kind but of degree. Therefore man's claim to an existence after death cannot be intrinsically superior to theirs. Again, the analysis of all mental operations, whether human or merely animal, into sensory and motor experiences, variously accumulated and combined, brought home their dependence on nervous structure and function as it never had been brought home before. In the case of special sense-energies, such as sight and hearing, their dependence had long been recognised, and the life of a disembodied spirit had come to be associated with pure thought and emotion without any intermixture of visual and auditory sensations. But—apart from the necessary presence of such sensations in an idealised form as the basis of thought and emotion themselves—the dependence of these higher mentalities on nervous energy now seemed no less manifest than the dependence of sight and hearing on the bodily eye and ear. More than this, the discovery of the muscular sense as an element common to the simplest outward perceptions and the highest processes of thought made their essential unity of composition still more apparent.[1] Finally, if the subjective side of religion, as hitherto understood, was seriously compromised by representing human reason as a simple prolongation of animal intelligence, and by the exhibition of both in their parallelism with more or less complicated nervous structure

[1] I presume that this remains true whether the muscular sense is or is not to be interpreted as a feeling of central innervation.

and function, the objective side of religion, or theology in the strict sense, seemed to run an equal danger. When reason and will were interpreted as simple and absolute energies, there was nothing paradoxical in conceiving them as the attributes of an eternal Being who had existed before there was a universe, and had created it out of his thoughts. But reason and will interpreted as complex and derivative structures, primarily destined to maintain the integrity of the living organism, occupied a wholly different position. To abstract them from their biological conditions, to divorce them from their material environment, and to endow them with an infinite capacity, was an anthropomorphism differing only from the idolatry of savages by the colossal scale of the credulity it implied.

Herbert Spencer's 'Principles of Psychology' appeared, as I have said, almost simultaneously with Bain's first great work; and with regard to the all-important question of reason it comes substantially to the same conclusion. Attacking the problem from a different side, that is, by the direct analysis of a typical process of inference, Spencer also reduces it to a perception of resemblance. And he further shows that this power of perceiving resemblances, or the faculty of identification, together with the correlative faculty of discrimination, is inherent in the very nature of consciousness itself. Were any one state of feeling to be kept up for ever it would cease to be feeling; without the shock of change there would be no sentience, no consciousness whatever. And this law applies to the feeling of change itself; to exist it must be contrasted with the feeling of sameness or identity. But to admit so much is to admit that there is a unity of composition through the whole range of mental phenomena. They are essentially homogeneous in all their manifestations from the lowest animal to the highest human intelligence.

Spencer said openly what Bain had only implied; and in his untrammelled position it cost much less to speak out. But also he had a reason which Bain had not for identifying human with animal intelligence. As already mentioned, he had become an ardent evolutionist long before the publication of Darwin's researches, and was the most strenuous advocate of the development hypothesis in the early fifties. His work on psychology

is memorable as the first attempt to explain the intellectual functions on evolutionary principles, the explanation itself being used to verify those principles in their application to life in general. For, according to Spencer, mind is no more than a particular aspect of life, the vital function which has to bring the activities of living beings into harmony with their environment. And if mind, which is a part of life, has been evolved, this furnishes a presumption that all life has been similarly built up.

In this way the great objection to Darwin's derivation of man from one of the lower animals had already been anticipated and removed by the psychological method. But its services were not limited to analysing reason into elements already implicit in the consciousness of a jelly-fish. The philosophers who strove to raise an impassable barrier between human and animal intelligence, did not rest their case on the prerogative of language alone. To use a scholastic distinction, they appealed to the matter no less than to the form of reason as constituting an essential difference between the two. There are, they said, certain necessary truths, recognised as such by an intuition of the pure reason, which alone make knowledge possible, which no mere animal possesses, and which have nothing in common with the adjustment of actions to external impressions, or whatever else goes by the name of intelligence in brutes. Among these are the axioms of arithmetic and geometry, the first principles of physics, and the first principles of morals. It will be remembered that Mill had warmly disputed the existence of any such difference between one class of truths and another, holding that the wider basis of experience on which these alleged intuitions rested sufficiently explained the superior certainty with which they were held and the supposed universality of their application. On the other hand, his opponents argued that no experience, however wide, would justify us in affrming the absolute universality and necessity of geometrical axioms; and that, in point of fact, those axioms were accepted by the learner with an assurance quite disproportionate to his very limited experience of their validity.

So the question stood when Herbert Spencer intervened in its discussion. He could not entirely agree with either party to the dispute. Each, he said, saw one side of the truth, but

only one. All knowledge comes from experience, and has no other conceivable source. So far Mill and the empiricists are right. But experience is of two kinds. There is the experience of the individual to which he owes much; but there is also the experience of the race to which he owes more—owes, indeed, the possibility of learning anything for himself. Organised in the brain by a process of gradual deposition and accretion, this experience constitutes an inheritance transmitted through successive generations and receiving fresh contributions from each in its turn. It is thus, and by no transcendental process, that what we rightly call innate principles and truths are acquired, their persistence and stability being a guarantee for their objective validity. Inseparable associations have their origin and justification in the constant conjunction of phenomena given to the senses from without. They resemble the tracings left by the self-registering instruments of a scientific observatory; or, better still, the stellar configurations stamped on a sensitive plate by repeated impacts of light conveyed through the lenses of an equatorially mounted telescope.

Herbert Spencer believed that by his theory of inherited ancestral experience he had reconciled the opposing views of Kant and Mill. In reality he had done nothing of the kind. He had considerably extended the ground occupied by the empirical school, and furnished them with a plausible reply to one of the objections previously urged against their explanation of necessary truths; but he had done no more. The main contention of Kant and his followers, which is that no amount of experience can give universality and necessity to a proposition, still remained unanswered, or answered only by such arguments as Mill had used. Moreover, the new theory, like every other physiological theory of knowledge, assumed experience as something quite intelligible, whose possibility needed no explanation. In other words, it assumed a ready-made external world, constituted, in the absence of any unifying consciousness, as an organised system of relations printing themselves off on a mind made equally ready to receive them. That was a view which no Kantian could possibly accept.

These observations must not be understood as implying that theism had anything to gain by the success of the criticisms directed against Spencer's psychology; or that religion in any

form was interested in the issue between the opposing schools of thought. All thought tends to discredit authority. A profounder study of the great metaphysical problems only brought into clearer view the radical incompatibility of any solution with the figments of our traditional mythology. In Germany a cry of 'Back to Kant' was raised as a protest against the bankrupt absolutism of Hegel and the new materialism of Büchner. But only Kant's rationalism was revived. While the 'Critique of Pure Reason' enlisted a whole army of eager commentators, the 'Critique of Practical Reason,' with its restored theology, was silently dropped out of sight. For the neo-Kantians there are no supernatural means of communication with realities beyond experience. All knowledge is of phenomena, and there is no room for faith. Such a philosophy might overcome materialism, but only at the cost of reducing not matter only, but also space, time, and causation to subjective appearances—in other words, at the cost of every element from which the idea of a personal God and a future life could be constructed. In England, or rather in Scotland, the cry was not back to Kant, but on to Hegel. His philosophy promised a way of deliverance from the various forms of agnosticism, critical and empirical—perhaps even a rehabilitation of orthodox religion. It achieved the first of these ends to the satisfaction of its adepts, but proved even more destructive to orthodoxy than English empiricism had been. What Mansel had foretold came to pass; and, indeed, with the example of Strauss and Feuerbach before his eyes, no great sagacity was implied by the prediction.

While the new psychology reasserted and confirmed that derivation of all knowledge from experience which had long been the tradition of English philosophy when unaffected by Continental influences, it also adopted to the fullest extent the parallel doctrine of determinism. Bain treats freewill as a notion hardly capable of being even represented in thought. To Herbert Spencer it means the liberty to desire or not to desire, and as such is negatived by 'the universal law that, other things equal, the cohesion of psychical states is proportionate to the frequency with which they have followed one another in experience.' For it is an inevitable corollary from

this law 'that all actions whatever must be determined by those psychical connexions which experience has generated—either in the life of the individual or in the general antecedent life of which the accumulated results are organised in his constitution.'[1] The illusory belief in ourselves as a free cause of action arises from the notion of our *ego* as something distinct from 'the entire group of psychical states which constituted the antecedent of the action'—whereas in reality the *ego* or self is at any moment no more than that aggregate of feelings and ideas.[2]

It will be noticed that physical science, now sometimes popularly represented as the sole enemy of freewill, has nothing to do with the destructive criticism of Bain and Spencer. Both were, no doubt, keen students of modern physics and physiology; but in this instance their conclusions are based on introspection, combined with observation of mankind, and might be made clear to a person entirely ignorant of material dynamics. To which it may be added that their contemporaries, Dr. Carpenter and Lord Kelvin, who occupied themselves exclusively with physical science, were strenuous upholders of freewill.

The great treatises on mind, whose relation to modern rationalism has been here exhibited, were—Spencer's especially—little read on their first appearance, and their influence on public opinion did not become manifest until much later. A far deeper and wider impression was created by the celebrated work of Buckle, whose first volume came out in 1857. Published as part of an 'Introduction to a History of Civilisation in England,' which history unhappily the writer did not live even to begin, it still amounted to a complete philosophy of human progress. For sheer intellectual power Buckle probably surpassed all his contemporaries; but in him the disproportionate development of memory both impeded the development of his other faculties, and stood in the way of his receiving full recognition for what he actually achieved in those comparatively disadvantageous circumstances. His ideation, copious, brilliant, and suggestive, seems not to have been more

[1] 'Principles of Psychology,' Vol. I., p. 500.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 501. My references are to the second edition, but these passages are textually reprinted from the edition of 1855.

unsound than that of some other writers who passed at the time for far safer guides. His critical attitude towards men and things was independent, robust, and sincere. His style, while lacking refinement, was strong, lucid, interesting, and sometimes rose to heights of moving eloquence not easily matched in modern philosophic literature. These qualities at once secured him a large popular audience both in England and abroad; nor, to judge by the constant reprints of his unfinished work, has the lapse of nearly half a century exhausted their fascination for the young.

A great critic, Thomas De Quincey, has distinguished between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power.[1] A scientific treatise would offer a type of the one, a poem, especially a lyric poem, of the other. But, as De Quincey also observes, there is a large neutral zone in which the two are inextricably blended. Most imaginative works, if they have any merit at all, not only stimulate but instruct; they tell us something new about nature or human life. A history or a philosophical treatise has no permanent value unless it is to some extent a work of art, giving us, together with new facts and ideas, an exalted sense of intellectual energy and curiosity, of capacity to cope with the materials of thought for ourselves. Buckle's work performed both services in a very eminent degree. Quite apart from his own particular theories, it opened out an enormous range of facts gathered from every department of learning; it introduced to the notice of the English reading public an array of great figures, especially in the intellectual history of France, whom they hardly knew even by name before; it associated with precise achievements the names of others who before had been merely the objects of a vague traditional admiration; doing in this way for the heroes of science and philosophy what Macaulay and Carlyle had done for the heroes of literature. At the same time this extended knowledge became a source of ideal power from being presented in every instance as an illustration of the vast general movement by which the fortunes of nations are determined, the conquests of civilisation pushed forward, and the victories of genius made available for the aggrandisement of the race.

[1] 'Works,' Vol. VIII., p. 11. The distinction seems to have been suggested to him by Wordsworth.

Buckle interested his readers first of all through his attitude towards religion; and that is also the point of view from which we have to consider him here. It is perfectly clear, though perhaps not very logical, and was the cause of much misunderstanding at the time. He held with passionate conviction to the immortality of the soul—not without a strong bias from the extraordinary intensity of filial affection which made his love for an adored and lost mother the one romance of his life. He also accepted the existence of a personal God, more, as would seem, from its traditional association with human immortality than from any direct evidence of its reality. With him theism rested on 'purely transcendental' grounds; but what these were he never explained. Final causes should be altogether banished from the study of the organic, as they had already been banished from the study of the inorganic world; and the Darwinian theory found him already converted at least to the general doctrine of transformism. He rejected all supernatural interference with the course of nature, whether it took the form of miracles, special providence, or particular creations, with uncompromising decision. His God, like Carlyle's, never did anything, and indeed would have fallen in the opinion of his worshipper by any attempt to meddle with such a perfect piece of mechanism as the universe.[1]

Holding such views, it never seems to have occurred to Buckle that they were destructive of Christianity; nor could he easily forgive any attempt to destroy it. He speaks in terms of strong reprobation about the anti-Christian French writers, who are only to be excused by the fact that what he calls the 'truths of religion' had become associated with the maintenance of a tyrannical government in Church and State. With us English the association does not exist, and therefore 'in our country the truths of religion are rarely attacked except by superficial thinkers.'[2] One wonders by what circumstances, then, are the controversial writings of Middleton, Hume, and Gibbon to be excused. Yet Buckle refers to them without censure and even with admiration.[3] It seems very much as if an Englishman might steal a horse when a Frenchman might not look over the hedge.

[1] 'History of Civilization in England,' Vol. II., p. 599.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 594. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 390.

After having been identified with Christianity, 'the fundamental truths of religion' are subsequently, in a manner more consonant with Buckle's own opinions, reduced to 'the existence of the Deity and the immortality of the soul.'[1] These doctrines had certainly not been attacked by the deistical school, but they were attacked by D'Holbach and his friends—much to the disgust of our historian. Referring to atheism, his language becomes positively violent. It is 'a cold and gloomy dogma, a singular error, an eccentric taint which those affected by it' are generally 'willing to conceal,' 'a contagion' which, strange to say, several even of the higher intellects in France 'were unable to escape.'[2]

To qualify any opinion by such terms is a species of intolerance. Sensitive persons will be rather shy of telling what they think when its profession makes them liable to be denounced by one whom they regarded in the light of a friend, as more or less mentally diseased, and not ashamed to let the public into the secret of their lamentable condition. To adopt such a system in reference to plain speaking in theology is not distinguishable in principle from the coarser method of putting down atheism by fine, imprisonment, or disqualification for office. Yet only two years later (1859) Buckle joined heartily with Mill in calling for the removal of every obstacle to the public discussion of what he looked on as the fundamental truths of religion. And his second volume, published two years later still, exhibits a still more marked change of tone. I do not think that it contains a word of censure on those who go farther in negation than the author does; while its concluding pages emphasise his own hostility to the popular creed with a fearlessness and vigour not exhibited in the first volume, although that had won the admiration of at least one critic by the example it set of intellectual courage to a nation of intellectual cowards.[3]

It seems, then, impossible to avoid the conclusion that Buckle, when he first appeared before the public, had followed the ancient advice to be bold, but not too bold. He certainly had not let it be known how complete was his agreement with the French deistical writers for whom he offers a sort of regretful

[1] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 786. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 787–8.

[3] Fitzjames Stephen in an article on Buckle in the 'Edinburgh Review,' April, 1858 (Vol. CVII.).

apology. And in denouncing their atheistic successors he lets himself go with the exuberance of an orator who partly carries his audience with him, but is partly borne along by the stress of their sympathetic emotion. In the great peroration of the second volume there is also a certain regrettable violence; but it is the violence of a protest against the excess, not against the deficiency of theological belief.

It seems to me that Buckle's altered attitude affords a remarkable proof of the great revolution wrought in public opinion by the steady stream of rationalistic criticism, which, beginning with the advent of Strauss and Comte, had reached a first crisis in the Oxford revolutionary movement of 1849, and which then, under the form of Unitarian and Broad Church theology, continued through the fifties until it reached a second crisis in the publication of 'Essays and Reviews.' Buckle did not live to hear those legal decisions by which the clergy were set free, and with the clergy the laity as well. But there can be no doubt that he would have hailed them with satisfaction; and the feeling of approaching emancipation vibrates through his last pages, together, it may be, with a certain just consciousness that his own first volume had largely contributed to that great wave of public opinion before which the bulwarks of intolerance and superstition were at last giving way.

Buckle's main contention is essentially the same as that put forward fifteen years earlier by Comte and Mill. His work has for its object to show, first of all, that social phenomena, or, in other words, the behaviour of men acting together in masses, are, like the phenomena of the material universe, subject to law, or, more precisely, that they enter into the unbroken chain of universal causation. And in the second place he undertakes to establish the most general laws on which the history of civilisation depends. The first thesis was, in his opinion, opposed to theology but not to religion. The distinction is not one that need delay us here. It will, at any rate, be admitted that the subjection of human action to the law of universal causation is one of the most important principles for which modern rationalists contend, and that it is incompatible with a belief either in special providence or in freewill.

The dogma of providential interference with the course of

history is summarily dismissed as being without evidence. As for freewill, without expressly denying its possibility, Buckle maintains that 'when we perform an action we perform it in consequence of some motive or motives; that these motives are the results of some antecedents; and that, therefore, if we were acquainted with the whole of the antecedents, and with all the laws of their movements, we could with unerring certainty predict the whole of their immediate results.'[1]

So far, then, his position is substantially identical with that of Mill, Bain, and Spencer. What distinguishes him from these and all other English philosophers who had previously discussed the question is that he rests determinism not on metaphysical or psychological arguments, but, inductively, on statistics, and especially on the statistics of suicide. His case is that as this of all actions is the least liable to be prevented by external causes, it offers the best opportunity for freewill, if such a thing existed, to disturb the operation of circumstances and character acting in orderly sequence so as to bring about a predetermined result. Now, so far is this from being the case that even in so comparatively circumscribed an area as that of London the number of suicides remains remarkably constant from year to year, the variations being no greater than might be expected from the oscillation of temporary causes.

It has been suggested in answer to Buckle's argument that freewill, supposing it to exist, would, in reference to our knowledge, come under the category of chance; and that, according to the doctrine of chances, the same number of accidental events must constantly repeat themselves if a sufficiently large number of throws be taken, as happens, for instance, at the gaming-table, where red and black turn up on the average with equal frequency. This is true, but the parallel is not exact. For the shuffling of cards is an act whose result depends on certain physical antecedents strictly subject to the law of causation, and on certain psychical antecedents which, according to determinists, are equally regular in their operation. In calculating the chances that a particular card or a particular colour will turn up at the next deal or at any future deal, we are guided by our experience of this regularity, as well as limited by our ignorance of the forces which nevertheless are known to be

[1] 'History of Civilization,' Vol. I., p. 17.

at work. But if a considerable class of human actions were absolutely uncaused—as, on the theory of freewill, determinists hold that they would be—our expectation of future events, so far as they depend on human volition, would be based on ignorance alone; for it is in the highest degree improbable that our experience of the past would be marked by that regular return of certain numbers now exhibited in statistical tables. And even if the same, or approximately the same, numbers were to repeat themselves for a term of years, the chances of their future recurrence would not on that account be any greater.

Nor would this capriciousness be limited to purely voluntary actions, such as the various categories of crime are supposed to represent. For by continually interfering with the conditions under which purely involuntary actions are performed, they would spread the same irregularity like a contagious disease through the whole range of human transactions, and even, to a considerable extent, into the operation of lifeless physical forces. For example, we may fairly describe the act of posting an unaddressed letter as absolutely involuntary, except in those cases, if any, when it contains explosive matter intended to blow open the letter-box. Yet the person who drops his blank missive into the box has almost certainly been reduced to this state of forgetfulness by a series of actions on the part of himself or others which were consciously performed, which would be commonly called free, and by which, on occasion, legal responsibility would be incurred. Yet, according to Buckle, 'year after year the same proportion of letter writers forget' to address their letters.[1] Thus, from their capability of being registered, a very small class of involuntary actions not only betray their own regularity, but become the exponent of a corresponding regularity in the whole mass of unrecorded voluntary actions.

I may add that the argument for determinism derived from statistics received the full adhesion of Mill, who hailed it as 'a felicitous verification *a posteriori* of the law of causation in its application to human conduct;' inserting a whole chapter on the subject in the fifth edition of his 'Logic,' where it is restated and cleared from the misapprehensions of those who fancied that the doctrine of averages would in some way prove

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

fatal to morality, and even destroy the possibility of making a rational choice.

Such was Buckle's position in the rationalistic controversy, and such was his most indubitable contribution to the destruction of what he called theology as opposed to religion, but which in the judgment of many able thinkers both was and is a vital point of religious belief. It occupied a very small part of his work, being merely introductory to the vast enterprise of reducing human history to a science, after the possibility of reducing its phenomena to law had been established. I need hardly say that in this enterprise Buckle did not succeed. Auguste Comte at an earlier, and Herbert Spencer at a later period, with less knowledge of history than his, have done much more to disentangle its general tendencies and to present them in a systematised form. His philosophy, in so far as it was original, has gained few or no adherents, and therefore would not call for a detailed examination, even if its truth or error were more relevant to the subject of the present chapter. Some points, however, are sufficiently connected with the general development of rationalism to justify a passing notice.

Buckle's early manhood coincides with the rise and triumph of the Anti-Corn-Law League; and he is known to have followed the struggle for free-trade with passionate sympathy. In all his enormous range of studies political economy seems to have been that which interested him most; and in his opinion, deliberately expressed, Adam Smith's 'Wealth of Nations' was the most important book ever written. His own views, however, were not derived from it, but from the English school, from Malthus and Ricardo. Under the influence of J. S. Mill, whom he admired most of all contemporary thinkers, the study of logic was combined with economics, and the two were fused, or rather forced, into a new method for unlocking the secrets of history. Still more personal influences helped to determine this special point of view. The elder Buckle had accumulated a fortune in business, and this gave his son, who had no taste for business, the leisure required for accumulating knowledge. Elements of well-being so important to himself seemed of necessarily equal importance to the whole human race. He concluded that the love of money and the love of knowledge

were the two great springs of action. The totality of human actions is determined by the totality of human knowledge. Mathematically speaking, it is a function of two variables, the absolute amount of knowledge possessed at any time, and the extent to which knowledge is diffused through the community. Mill's luminous method of studying the laws of wealth under the separate heads of production and distribution suggested a parallel treatment of intellectual economics, in the elaboration of which Mill's treatment of logic under the heads of deduction and induction was also found valuable.

Nor does the parallel end here. Anti-Corn-Law agitation had familiarised the young student's thoughts with the idea of protection as the great obstacle both to the accumulation of wealth and to its more general diffusion. It had familiarised him even more with the idea of government as at best a necessary evil, needing constant vigilance in order that it may be limited to its proper function of merely keeping the peace. But the mischievous interference of government has not been restricted to fostering one industry at the expense of another. It has carried the protectionist spirit into the sphere of knowledge also, prescribing to its subjects what opinions they are to hold, and smothering criticism on its own actions by a lavish distribution of pensions among literary men—who had much better be left to support themselves by the sale of their books—or silencing it by imprisonment and exile. In this sense churches are organised instruments of intellectual protection, and natural objects of hostility to a young man who had been brought up by a Calvinist mother at the very time when the Oxford movement seemed to be threatening England with a return to priestcraft and superstition.

Thus Buckle came to think of history as a sort of vast anti-corn-law agitation, with the substitution of knowledge for cheap bread, of ecclesiastical corporations for the landlord-ring by which protection was maintained, and of theological dogmas for the inferior article forced by them on the public. Or again, we may say that he looked on theology as the pestilent system of governmental interference with industry and trade, raised to a transcendental value and personified in a false representation of the Deity. His original intention had not been to dwell so exclusively on what impedes the growth of knowledge, but rather

to trace the laws of its acquisition; just as economists, beginning with the agencies by which wealth is created, that is land, capital, and labour, pass on to an analysis of the modes by which it is distributed, as rent, profit, and wages, reserving the practical questions of taxation and of state-direction for a sort of appendix. But the instincts of the political orator so disturbed the speculations of the systematic thinker that every other topic in the history of civilisation was pushed aside to make room for scathing denunciations of oppression and superstition, or eloquent summaries of the conquests made by reason, whether under the form of sceptical criticism, of emancipating philosophy, or of positive scientific discoveries.

Hence arises a surprising uniformity in the introductory sketches of English, French, Spanish, and Scotch history, originally intended to serve as so many distinct and contrasted studies of the different factors involved in human progress. In reality these chapters are but so many accounts of the efforts made, with more or less success, by the civil and religious rulers of mankind to put down liberty of thought and action among their subjects. There is about as much said of ecclesiastical tyranny in the history of Scotland as in the history of Spain; about as much against protection in the history of Spain as in the history of France; as fierce attacks on reactionists in the history of England as anywhere else.

Nor was this change of front by any means a misfortune for Buckle's book. For, so far as it goes, his views about the accumulation and diffusion of knowledge seem to be hopelessly mistaken. The unfortunate suggestiveness of Mill's 'Logic' had led him to associate those processes with the prevalence respectively of the deductive and the inductive methods in scientific research. In point of fact there is no such connexion; or, if any, it is exactly the reverse of what Buckle thought, the truths reached by deduction being rather more easy of apprehension by the unlearned than those resulting from a laborious comparison of minute facts. At any rate, Scotland supplies a singularly infelicitous example of the effect attributed to the deductive method in retarding the diffusion of knowledge, since the common people in that country are the best educated in Europe. Buckle would of course object that the only real measure of knowledge is the absence of superstition, and that,

judged by this standard, the Scotch are a very ignorant people. But by his own admission the French are remarkably free from superstition; and he does not pretend that their intellect is less deductive than the Scotch intellect. In reality it is much more deductive. A closer or a less prejudiced investigation would have shown him that the accumulation and diffusion of knowledge depend on the organisation of teaching, not on the methods of research adopted by scientific discoverers.

Had Buckle lived to write the promised sections on Germany and America, his failure, so far, to disentangle the economics of knowledge from its history might have been partially redeemed. As it was, he found himself almost unconsciously drawn into a theme more congenial to his proper powers, and as things then stood in the world of thought, more ripe for his peculiar treatment. What England wanted was, not theories more or less contestable about the laws and causes of civilisation, but to be liberated from the religious terrorism which had been weighing on her since the Peace of 1814. It was necessary that a man should stand up and teach her people the very reverse of what Keble and Newman had taught; that religious intolerance and exclusiveness, instead of being brought back, should be much more thoroughly expelled from our political and social arrangements; that superstitious gloom, instead of being encouraged, should be dispelled by education; that priestly authority is not a blessing but a curse; that the Middle Ages, so far from offering a picture of ideal justice and romantic spirituality, were really what Voltaire had shown them to be, a period of barbarism, delusion, profligacy, and oppression.

Nor was this enough. The temporary discredit of the High Church movement, although largely due to Oxford rationalism, had led to the immediate ascendency of a particularly odious Protestant faction, whose pretensions were hardly less dangerous to reason than the Tractarian claims had been. For degraded superstition and intolerant fanaticism there was little to choose between these religionists and those whom they denounced as Romanisers; while they gave greater scandal to historical science by insolently appropriating the victories of modern Hellenism as so many witnesses to the beneficence of their narrow and ungenial creed. Such illusions found in Buckle a resolute and unsparing enemy. As a social factor, he seems to think

that religion may do harm, but cannot do good. According to him, the religious opinions of a people are not a cause but a symptom of its civilisation. Conversions to a more enlightened creed remain merely formal and ineffective until the converts have been educated up to it, and then their improvement is due, not to the new faith, but to the new knowledge.

Protestantism is an example of such a religion. It sprang up in the sixteenth century as a form of Christianity more suitable to the advanced knowledge of that age than the Catholicism of the Dark Ages. But Protestantism is not in itself a cause of superior enlightenment, as can easily be proved by comparing the superstition and intolerance of the Scotch and the Swedes with the higher civilisation of the French. Henry of Navarre showed his statesmanlike character by the facility with which he changed his religion to suit the varying circumstances of his age; and Richelieu performed a signal service to the civilisation of his country in saving it from the domination of such gloomy fanatics as the French Protestants had become in the reign of Louis XIII. The Church of England persecuted when it had the power, and 'the first and only time when it made war upon the crown was when the crown had declared its intention of tolerating, and in some degree of protecting the rival religions of the country.'[1] Scotland pairs off with Spain as an evil example of the misery wrought by a priesthood as such when circumstances enable it to carry its natural inclinations into practice.

Buckle has been called an adherent of Comte. He certainly admired Comte greatly, and he may have learned something from the 'Philosophie Positive.' But their views about the unseen world and about the past and future of mankind differed widely. The French thinker stood for government, the English thinker for liberty; the one was for a Church without a God, the other for a God without a Church. In Comte there is still a large element of romanticism; in Buckle there is none; and therefore for the history of rationalism he marks a more advanced stage, the return to eighteenth-century traditions being with him more complete. At the same time his religious opinions are a curious anticipation of ideas which have since become

[1] 'History of Civilization,' Vol. I., p. 366.

widely diffused among the educated classes in this country. Of these practically the most important is the belief that science and religion have nothing to do with one another: there is not now any supernatural interference with the course of nature, nor, so far as we can look back, has there ever been any since the world existed. Men of science are no longer expected to find arguments for the existence of God; but neither have they any right to deny, or any means of disproving it. On the other hand, our hopes of a future life perhaps admit of experimental verification. Had Buckle survived long enough, he would probably have become an active member of the Society for Psychical Research.

So far as rationalism goes, the net result of Buckle's labours was a considerable addition to the body of opinion which made for law against miracle, including under law the doctrine of determinism as opposed to freewill, and a considerably greater accession of strength to the demand for complete liberty of speculation, whatever its consequences to theology might be. In upholding the law of universal causation he comes into line with Mill, Bain, and Spencer, more remotely also with Grove and Darwin. In pleading for liberty he joins hands with the Broad Church leaders, one of whom at least, Baden Powell, seems to have read his book with considerable sympathy. In this direction also he brings to a head the manifest tendency of the whole historical literature which was then doing so much to form the minds of the new generation. It was no doubt a partisan literature, the work of pamphleteers who valued the investigation of past events chiefly for the light it threw on contemporary interests. All fought directly or indirectly on the progressive side, or at least on the side of emancipation from ancient prejudices, as Protestants in the negative sense, if not always as Whigs. Grote looked on Greek democracy as the nursing mother of intellectual freedom; Macaulay and Carlyle, with very conflicting ideas of good government, found themselves essentially united in their detestation of the reactionary Stuarts, as well as of those who would revive Stuart principles in modern England; Froude justified Tudor absolutism simply because it was the best method available for delivering England from Roman tyranny; Milman traced the fortunes of Latin Christianity

with an appearance of artistic detachment which only half concealed his deep-seated contempt for Catholic dogma, and his sympathy for those who in all ages had cast it off; Motley, who, though an American, belongs to the English group, related with passionate enthusiasm the struggle of a heroic Protestant people for the rights of conscience against Rome's chief champion, Spain. Buckle, as I have said, freed the great controversy from its accidental association with one particular form of creed and worship, representing it purely as a struggle between science and armed superstition; but in so doing he merely pushed to their logical conclusion principles inherited by the Reformers from the Renaissance.

Still, even Buckle had not presented the right of private judgment in religion as an absolute and universal principle for the direction of public opinion. For one thing he and his Protestant contemporaries occupied themselves exclusively with the denunciation of certain governments or churches which had with more or less success tried to put down certain heretics or philosophers by main force. They had not looked on the obnoxious kings or priests as the mere agents of an intolerant public opinion; still less had they contemplated the possibility that public opinion might be able to execute its decrees without the intervention of such agents, by the simple method of social excommunication. Nay, Buckle himself, as we have seen, had indirectly countenanced this method of dealing with atheism by referring to the doctrine of Diderot and D'Holbach as an 'eccentric taint' which those infected with it did well to conceal. That it might be a duty for atheists to promulgate their convictions never seems to have crossed his imagination for a single moment.

The vindication of liberty to its fullest extent was an office reserved for John Stuart Mill, whose 'Essay on Liberty' is still gratefully remembered all over the civilised world, and has even been called the gospel of the nineteenth century. With much of Mill's argument rationalism as such is not concerned, for it relates not to freedom of opinion but to freedom of action, and would still remain a matter of controversy even were religion to be universally abandoned, or to excite no more animosity than a difference of taste about tobacco excites among smokers.

And there are probably not a few who, like Fitzjames Stephen, would go all lengths in permitting the open discussion of theological questions, while regarding private immorality—or what they consider to be such—as a fit subject for prohibitive legislation. At the same time it seems likely that Mill's eloquent pleading for individuality in character, and for letting people alone when their conduct leaves the happiness of others unaffected, gave a greatly increased momentum to the arguments for liberty of thought and discussion with which it is associated. In England there had long been exceptional toleration, sometimes amounting to positive kindliness, towards eccentricity of behaviour; and religious unbelief actually gained by being classed with singularity of personal character.

Mill does not advocate liberty of discussion as an abstract right, intuitively recognised as such; nor does he treat it, like Herbert Spencer in his 'Social Statics,' as a deduction from the general principle of individual liberty, known independently of all experience as the justification of every other moral law. Regarding utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions, he submits this question also to its jurisdiction. That society should suppress the discussion of any doctrine whatever is against the interest of society itself. To put down the expression of opinion by force is to assume the infallibility of the persecutor, for nothing less than such a pretension could justify his proceedings. Now, history shows by such signal instances as the execution of Socrates and the execution of Jesus that human tribunals are very fallible, and are liable to charge the teachers of new truths with disseminating mischievous falsehoods. Granted that in the affairs of daily life we have to act on certain principles in the absolute assurance of their truth, even to the extent of staking fortune and life on the conviction, still such conduct does not exclude the possibility of our being mistaken. It is just because these beliefs have been freely exposed to hostile criticism and have survived its application, that we trust in their solidity. Disallow the criticism and the confidence will disappear.

Even if an infallible authority existed, free discussion of the dogmas guaranteed by it would be desirable. Unquestioned beliefs soon cease to be held as real beliefs by those who repeat them as stereotyped forms. Universal acquiescence breeds

universal apathy. There is no genuine conviction without a knowledge of the reasons on which conviction rests. And these reasons cannot be appreciated if the objections which may be urged against them are kept out of sight. It may be said that the mass of the people are incapable of following an argument, and should take their opinions on trust from the instructed. But at the present day no hard-and-fast line can be drawn between the instructed and the uninstructed classes. Nor can the trained controversialist know all the possible objections to his creed unless the books containing them are allowed to circulate freely among the whole community.

Such considerations would tell decisively for liberty, even if in the supposed cases the truth were all on one side. But in actual controversies this does not happen. As a rule, neither side is entirely right or entirely wrong. Each has something to learn from the other, each contains some element that was needed to complete the full view of reality. Thus the Christian ethics of self-suppression are good so far as they go, but they require to be supplemented by the pagan ethics of self-assertion.

It is rather difficult to conceive how a persecutor could be converted to toleration by reading Mill's 'Liberty.' For to appreciate the force of his arguments one must already admit the supremacy of reason; and that is just what a persecutor will not admit. He will use reason to the very limited extent required for arguing that there must be an infallible authority in matters of religious belief, and for applying its decrees to particular cases; but further than that he will not go. On the question of toleration, as on all other moral questions, a consistent Roman Catholic will submit to the ruling of his Church. A Protestant of the old school will probably regard the injunctions of Deuteronomy as still binding on the Christian conscience. Persons holding the simple creed of natural theism might be induced to grant atheists the toleration which Rousseau had refused them; but their conversion had already been effected when Mill took the field.

Since then the question of religious liberty has entered on a new phase for which its theorist made no provision, and which he can hardly have foreseen. It has become complicated with the question of public education in England, and of private

education in France. Mill thought that nothing but truths on which all were agreed should be taught in State-supported schools. It was then not suspected that religious parents, or at least their clerical prompters, would look on it as a kind of persecution to have their children educated on a curriculum of which dogmatic theology did not form an integral element, or even to be taxed for the support of such a system. Still less was it foreseen that under a Republican government religious associations would be suppressed for teaching Catholic principles on an entirely voluntary system, without any help or encouragement from the State.

In fact, Mill is so engrossed with the reasons for giving full scope to novelties in opinion and practice that he ignores the equally important question how far the old-fashioned beliefs and habits which they propose to supersede should be allowed to continue. On principles of utility their claim to toleration is by no means clear, nor in fact has it often been admitted. Experience seems to show that where there is a strong feeling on both sides old ways and new cannot get on together peaceably; there is a struggle for existence, decided at last more by force than by reason. Thus, apart from the unregenerate impulse to attack those who differ from us, each side can appeal to the law of self-preservation. Marcus Aurelius, whose persecution of the Christians seems to Mill such a tragic mistake, has been justified on the plea that the Church, when it gained power, put down much that he held dear with more unsparing severity than any exercised by himself or by his polytheistic successors. Since Froude's 'History' we know that not only was Protestantism established in England by force, but also that this compulsion was exercised by a small minority of the people. One cannot then blame the Catholics in other countries for using every precaution to protect themselves against similar treatment. In modern France, whichever party gains the ascendency can justify its intolerant proceedings by the same plea of necessary self-protection.

Mill talks about religious beliefs as if they were historical or philosophical theories like those of Grote and Hamilton; and so, no doubt, they are from the rationalist point of view. But they also, for good or evil, have a power possessed by no other theories of drawing those who accept them into powerful

corporations, which, once constituted, excite an enthusiasm and generate a will to live, in whose presence the love of truth becomes of secondary, if of any, importance. 'Everything for the Church' becomes the watchword of its supporters, as 'everything for the Army' becomes the watchword of soldiers, and may, as with them, be so interpreted as to cover forgery and false witness. Confronted by such opponents, those to whom the extension of knowledge and freedom is the highest interest will also band themselves together, in France as the Republic, in Germany as the Modern State, in England as the Liberal Party, with a tendency everywhere to substitute force, more or less veiled, for free discussion. Nor in the interests of freedom itself can we say that they are wrong. The question has not yet been decided, and must eventually be fought out with a wider experience of its developments and a subtler appreciation of its possible complications than Mill possessed, or, living when he did, could possess.

As it happened, the value of what he did was created by the limitations of what he saw. While appearing to lay down maxims of eternal validity for the future guidance of civilised mankind, he was really proposing just the sort of emancipation then needed in England, and supporting it by just the sort of arguments to which Englishmen would most willingly listen. For a high-spirited and generous people, bred up in the traditions of the parliamentary arena, bred up also in the traditions of honourable strife, of law to the quarry and of fair hearing to the accused, proud too of their religious liberty, it was not pleasant to be told that there were subjects on which an Englishman could not speak his mind; and that too less from fear of legal penalties—although these still existed—than because their discussion was debarred by that tyranny of the majority hitherto associated with the despised and hated mob-rule of American democracy.[1] The restraints on liberty were, in point of fact, much weaker than Mill supposed, as the success of Buckle and Darwin sufficiently proved. But imaginary

[1] Fitzjames Stephen, in his article on Buckle, complains that, 'the social penalties of unorthodox opinion are so severe, and are exacted in so unsparing a manner, that philosophy, criticism, and science itself too often speak amongst us in ambiguous whispers what ought to be proclaimed from the housetops' ('Edinburgh Review,' Vol. CVII., p. 471).

obstacles may be no less effective than real ones in checking advance, and need no less courage to overcome. The difference is that they disappear at the first attack.

There is a note of personal pathos in Mill's demand for liberty of discussion which became more intelligible when the secret of his own religious opinions was revealed. At the time when it appeared an essay on the 'Utility of Religion' lay finished in his desk, not to be published until after his death. It is a powerful argument, greatly superior to 'Philip Beauchamp's' on the same subject, to prove that morality is independent of the belief in God and immortality, which may even impede its full development. The popular theology is unsparingly attacked from the ethical side, and the Religion of Humanity extolled as an advantageous substitute. Had Mill published this very trenchant deliverance when it was written, or at any time during the ensuing decade, it might conceivably have done even more for the emancipation of English thought than his essay on Liberty, by throwing on the progressive side the authority of one who passed for being the greatest thinker of his age. On the other hand, such extreme rationalism might have merely discredited the much more important interests then at stake—the liberty of clergymen like Williams and Wilson to reject what had become incredible in Scripture-history or traditional dogma, the liberty of Darwin and Huxley to apply the law of universal causation to the origin of species.

The English revolution in speculative opinion went hand in hand with a world-wide revolution in politics, each receiving inspiration from the other. Simultaneously with the appearance of Buckle's volume came the first step towards emancipation in Russia, and the appearance of his second volume coincided with the completion of that great work. Among the memorable events of 1859 Mill's 'Liberty' and Darwin's 'Origin of Species' rank together with the expulsion of Austria from Lombardy and Central Italy. Next year, within three months after Wilson and Jowett led their little band against the fortress of conservative theology, Garibaldi set sail with his thousand for Marsala; and the last stand of the Bourbons at Gaeta played a sinister accompaniment to the protest of our Bishops against 'Essays and Reviews.' Then the conflict

between freedom and slavery, civilisation and barbarism, took shape on a scale of wholly unprecedented magnitude in the American War of Secession, to be fought out simultaneously with the war of opinion in England, leading to the same triumphant issue for the cause of reason on both sides of the Atlantic, the fall of Richmond in April, 1865, being followed by what we now know to have been the defeat of English clericalism in the general election of July in that same year. Then, twelve months later, as though anticipating the new Atlantic cable, the lightnings of deliverance crossed from the battle-fields of Virginia to the battle-fields of Bohemia, where the champion of Jesuitism, rising in her fall, went down at Sadowa before the champion of North German science and culture. And all this time, above the clash of arms were heard the voices of the French Opposition speakers, reclaiming the lost liberties of their country, and multiplying their numbers fivefold at each election, until at last they overthrew the seemingly solid fabric reared by the alliance of brute force with obscurantism at the opening of the previous decade. A few so-called liberal Catholics might be found in their ranks, and a few freethinkers among the supporters of the Empire. But on the whole the absolutists sided with Rome or with orthodox Protestantism, the rationalists with representative government or with the Republic.

It is to be noted as characteristic of English feeling at that time that although a certain amount of popular sympathy went with causes fundamentally opposed to freedom, this generally arose from a misapprehension of the issues involved. Many of those who wished success to the Southern Confederacy had been equally devoted to the cause of Italian freedom. They had been told that slavery had nothing to do with the Secession War, and that it was really a conflict for empire on the one side and for independence on the other—or even, as some said, between protection and free-trade. So also in the Schleswig-Holstein war a good deal of English sympathy was wasted on the Danish oppressors of a subject German population; but it was given in complete ignorance of the facts, and went to swell the chorus of liberal opinion.

Whether the vast tide of feeling in favour of universal emancipation from constituted authority has been justified by

the event, or whether the benefits, if any, were worth the tremendous sacrifice of human happiness by which they were bought, are questions which need not here be discussed. What I contend for is that the deliverance of human will everywhere made for the deliverance of human thought in England, where, more than in other countries, the struggle was viewed as a whole, and followed with breathless interest through all its phases from first to last. This revolution of the nineteenth century, whatever its shortcomings, sins, or failures, has neither been disfigured by a Reign of Terror, nor has it brought forth an aggressive despotism, nor seen half its fruits snatched away by a new Holy Alliance, nor, at least in our country, has it left behind that seething mass of poverty and discontent to which the reactionary obscurantism of the religious revival was due. Accordingly the political movement, where it told at all, told exclusively in favour of rationalism, by which in turn it has been accelerated.

Before concluding this chapter I have to mention one more indirect contribution made by contemporary English thought towards the weakening of theological belief. This was the increasing action of negative criticism on ancient history. It has already been mentioned that Dr. Arnold desiderated the application of Wolf's and Niebuhr's methods to the Old Testament; and that Jowett's doubts about the Gospels were first awakened by hearing a course of lectures on Niebuhr. In the absence of real religious liberty nothing could as yet be done to carry out Arnold's wish; but there was no obstacle to pushing on enquiry in the field of classical scholarship. This was very effectively done by two English writers, both of them amateurs, George Grote and Sir G. C. Lewis, who respectively submitted the sources of early Greek and of early Roman history to a new and searching examination. It resulted in the rejection of much that their German predecessors had allowed to pass as authentic. Grote's attitude towards the Homeric poems was certainly more conservative than Wolf's, though equally independent of tradition. On the other hand, the whole mass of legendary narrative, out of which Thirlwall still believed that some credible information could be extracted, is flung aside as historically worthless, however valuable it may be as a record of belief, and the authentic narrative made to begin no earlier

than the first Olympiad. Part of the Lycurgan legislation in particular is shown by arguments now generally accepted to have been forged for the purpose of legitimising the agrarian measures long afterwards proposed by Spartan kings. In dealing with later periods of Greek history, Grote shows much less scepticism than would now be thought advisable; but the numerical statements of Herodotus about the army of Xerxes are discussed with a freedom which another historian, Sir George Cox, uses to justify Colenso's criticism of the Pentateuch.

Grote's criticisms occupy a comparatively small space in his 'History of Greece,' and were calculated to influence opinion only by way of suggestion and analogy. Very different and far more destructive is Cornewall Lewis's celebrated work on the 'Credibility of Early Roman History.' Not only are the negative conclusions of Beaufort and other pioneers restated and extended with all the force of the author's immense scholarship, but the fancy-picture which Niebuhr, in a truly romanticist spirit, had substituted for the old story on the strength of certain intuitions, claimed by him as a special endowment, are subjected to the same merciless treatment. In Freeman's energetic language, 'beneath the Thor's hammer of Sir George Cornewall Lewis the edifice of Titus Livius and the edifice of Barthold Niebuhr fall together in the dust.'[1] The destructive criticism of Lewis proceeds on a twofold method. He begins by exhaustively enumerating the written sources of early Roman history, with the result of showing that the most ancient authorities begin at a period some centuries later than many of the events which they profess to relate, contemporary evidence not being available before the invasion of Pyrrhus. He then analyses the stories as they have come down to us, and shows by their inconsistencies and improbabilities that besides being unauthenticated they are untrustworthy.

Subsequent research has not tended to rehabilitate the credit of early Roman any more than of early Greek history, and has even pushed scepticism beyond the limits assigned by Lewis. But we are not here concerned with the details of the subject. It is enough to indicate the connexion between the break-up of authority in profane and in sacred literature. Apologists were clearly mistaken when they accused Biblical

[1] Freeman's 'Essays,' Vol. II., p. 242.

critics of being animated by a peculiar hostility towards supernatural religion, a hostility which, as was confidently asserted, prevented them from treating its external evidence with common fairness. And the attempt to excite a prejudice against German critics, as though they were possessed by a peculiar mania for destruction, could not be better met than by the example of two such hard-headed Englishmen as Grote and Lewis. That there was a connexion, or at least a parallelism, between the two lines of investigation seems evident from the fact that when Colenso's examination first appeared two contemporary observers, diametrically opposed to one another in their religious beliefs, agreed in associating it with what had been done some years before by Niebuhr's illustrious English critic. 'It is certainly singular,' said Grote, 'to see a Bishop applying the historical principles of Sir George Lewis to the narrative of the Old Testament.'[1] 'If he belongs to any school at all,' said Maurice of Colenso, 'it is to the negative school of Cornewall Lewis.'[2]

Pure negation is assuredly not the best thing in the world; and the work of demolition becomes more interesting, as Niebuhr's success proved, when it is accompanied by an attempt at reconstruction; but the division of labour sometimes requires that they should be performed by different hands. In this instance the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch had to be cleared out of the way, not only because it was fabulous, but much more because it was blocking the scientific view of man's origin, of his early history, and of the history of religion, through its whole development both early and late.

[1] 'Life of George Grote,' p. 261.
[2] 'Life of F. D. Maurice,' Vol. II., p. 210.

CHAPTER XV

COMPROMISE AND CONCILIATION

For a considerable period after the publication of 'Essays and Reviews' English scholarship, apart from Colenso, added little or nothing to the direct criticism of religious belief. Although the contributors to that volume had won their claim to legal freedom, the victory had been bought so dear that they did not care to continue the fight against superstition, except by more covert methods, nor had they any heart left to attempt again the reconstruction of theology on a new and broader basis. As for their destined successors, the young men who were just entering life when the agitation against neology was at its highest, their attitude towards theology was as a rule marked by more or less contemptuous indifference. Physical science, history, and literature amply satisfied their appetite for speculative truth; and they had obtained the right to study these without regard to the claims of any traditional belief. Religion, in their opinion, was a purely personal matter. If it really needed an outward embodiment, no better form than Christianity had as yet been devised; with the silent proviso that by Christianity they understood what each believer chose to make out of it for himself. The history of dogma was a fascinating study—especially in the pages of Milman's 'Latin Christianity'; and no doubt, as even Comte admitted, dogmatic theology had played a great and useful part in presiding over the social evolution of other ages. But however this might be, it certainly should not be allowed to obstruct the advance of modern science; and its professors, to do them justice, were rapidly coming to see how ill-judged their original attitude of hostility towards Darwin had been. At any rate, aggressive infidelity was ill-bred; and to ignore the pretensions of the

Churches was wiser as well as more mannerly than to dispute them. Let delusions alone and they will die out of themselves.

Such an attitude on the part of the most highly educated classes towards religion was at this time habitual in Germany, France, and Italy, where it went by the name of indifferentism; and in England it had prevailed all through the latter half of the eighteenth century, after the deistical movement had been brought to an end, not, as is commonly stated, by its failure, but by its success. What marks the advance made in a century is that the residual belief of freethinkers was no longer deistic but agnostic. The word itself had not yet been coined, but so much of the thing was already current that the present seems a good opportunity for explaining its significance, more especially as a programme of agnostic philosophy was already put forward in 1860 by Herbert Spencer, who accepted the name when it was offered to him as an adequate designation for convictions which he never afterwards altered. I may therefore so far anticipate on the course of events as to use it in the present connexion, after briefly mentioning the circumstances of its origin.

A kind of debating club called the Metaphysical Society was formed in 1869 for the purpose of bringing together controversialists holding widely divergent views on religious questions, with the hope of reconciling their differences, or at least of finding some common ground on which they might meet. Needless to say, no sort of agreement was established, nor do the society's debates seem to have enriched English thought by a single new idea. However, they had the incidental advantage of suggesting to one of the members, Professor Huxley, the creation of a new word for the purpose of designating his philosophical position, the word agnostic. He took it from a reference made by St. Paul, or rather by the writer of Acts, to a deity whom the Athenians were supposed to worship under the name of the Unknown God. But there is this difference between Huxley and St. Paul, that whereas the Christian missionary proposed to give his audience full and authentic information about the object of their ignorant adoration, the modern scientific thinker held that no such light ever was or ever could be obtained. If God means an infinite and absolute Being who created the universe out of nothing, then such a Being has

never revealed himself to man, nor can man by searching find him out. Our knowledge is of phenomena, not of a reality underlying phenomena.

It is necessary at the outset to clear away a misconception which soon fastened on the word agnosticism, and has seriously perverted its significance in the popular apprehension ever since. Agnostics are commonly supposed to speak about God in the full Christian, or at least theistic sense, and, so speaking, to profess their complete ignorance, nay even their complete indifference, as to whether he does or does not exist. Thus the chief mystical and Catholic poet of the last generation, Coventry Patmore, tells us in an autobiographical fragment that until about eleven years old he was 'what is now called "an agnostic," that is,' he 'neither knew nor cared whether there is a God or no.'[1] Now, this is an entire mistake. There are, no doubt, many persons, both men and boys, in the deplorable condition briefly designated by Patmore. But they are not agnostics. Agnostics absolutely disbelieve in the God of popular theology; and many of them hold that the existence of such a ruler would be the worst of calamities to the universe.

It is not, however, on any *a priori* or optimistic grounds that an agnostic rejects what was, until lately, the popular idea of God. To say that such a scheme of things as that represented by Evangelical or Tractarian Christianity was impossible, would in his opinion be claiming more knowledge of the unseen universe than we can pretend to. The religion of Pascal and Butler, of Wilberforce and Newman, is judged to be untrue, not because its truth would be painful to contemplate, but because, like the astronomy and physics of Aristotle, it is contradicted by the facts of experience. A wide induction shows that supernatural events do not happen, that the law of universal causation remains unbroken, and that all assertions to the contrary fall to pieces by their own internal disagreement.

We have seen what powerful aid rationalism receives from modern science, with its doctrines of development, continuity, and conservation. Agnostics are not scientific sceptics: they freely receive these doctrines as empirical truths. But they contend that such discoveries, after destroying revealed religion, necessitate a reconsideration of the whole theistic position.

[1] 'Memoirs of Coventry Patmore,' Vol. II., p. 41.

Kant, Herschel, and Laplace with their nebular hypothesis, Lyell with his theory of geological uniformity, Darwin and Wallace with their reduction of teleology to mechanical causation by natural selection, have abolished the argument from final causes; Mayer, Joule, Grove, and Helmholtz, with their doctrine of the conservation of energy, have made the notion of a creator incredible. What evidence is left for the existence of a personal God?

Philosophers and religious thinkers had not waited for the vast scientific movement of the mid-century to perceive the inherent weakness of the argument from design. Macaulay's appeal to 'every beast, bird, insect, fish, leaf, flower, and shell,' even if logically valid, would prove nothing for the moral perfection or for the infinity of God, and not much for his unity. Accordingly, Francis Newman and others sought to found religion on an alleged consciousness of the infinite, and on the alleged sense of sin. It is, above all, the cogency of *their* inferences that the agnostic refuses to admit.

We have seen how an orthodox apologist, Mansel, in the interest of certain immoral dogmas assailed by the ethical theists, the Unitarians, and the Broad Church, put forth a trenchant criticism of natural religion, regardless of its fatal recoil on his own position. English agnosticism owes its individual character to his Bampton Lectures; but it also resulted from a far wider movement of thought, which had been in progress for over a century. Hume and Voltaire, Kant and Hamilton, Comte and Mill, had all contributed their share to the discredit of metaphysics, to the glorification of science and history. If our knowledge is limited by our experience, and if an infinite Being necessarily lies outside experience, then of such a Being we can know nothing. Moreover, our experience of events is shut up between very narrow limits in time. Therefore, the first origin and final destiny of the universe—supposing it to have an origin and a destiny—are equally inaccessible to our observation.

An orthodox apologist like Bishop Wilberforce, sincere or otherwise, might here step in and claim for revelation that it gave that very knowledge of transcendent things which reason had confessed herself impotent to afford. But the time for such an intervention had gone by. A school of historical criticism,

to which all agnostics adhered, had destroyed the basis of this alleged revelation. They believed, with Darwin, that it had never been given. What was more, apart from all historical investigation, their philosophy relieved them from the task of examining its credentials in detail. No communication can be verified as coming from a God about whom, by hypothesis, we know nothing and are precluded by the nature of our intelligence from ever knowing anything.

Such were the immediate fruits of Mansel's method. The case lay in a nutshell. He had rested Christianity's whole claim on miracles. His opponents answered, first that miracles did not happen, and secondly that if the events described as miraculous had happened, such occurrences would prove no more than that our knowledge of nature was less complete than we had believed.

Nor was the full value of agnosticism as a controversial method represented even by these triumphant replies. Since Butler, or rather since William Law, orthodox apologists, like other less dignified disputants, had freely resorted to recrimination in self-defence. There are objections, they urged, to every belief at least equal to the difficulties of Christian belief. Your ethical theist cannot explain the sin and suffering of the world. Your pantheist cannot explain how the unity of the Absolute is compatible with the multiplicity of the universe; or how, when all knowledge presupposes the distinction of subject and object, their identity in the divine essence can be conceived. Your atheist cannot explain the origination of living consciousness from dead matter.

Occasion has been taken in a former chapter to point out the inherent weakness of this logic, which puts an end to the employment of reason to decide the differences between rival systems of theology. What concerns us here is to observe its impotence as against the agnostic position. Adherents of the new school, when challenged to explain the origin of the universe, frankly replied that they could not explain it at all, not having been there when it was made, or known any one else who was there, or seen another universe like it being made. Experience tells us of successive transformations, but nothing of an absolute beginning. Possibly there never has been any beginning; and it hardly lies in the mouths of those who preach the past

eternity of God to call the past eternity of nature inconceivable. Theologians themselves have to admit an ultimate mystery, and differ from their opponents only in pushing it a little further off, recalling thereby the familiar example of the elephant and the tortoise. There is a point at which we must all become agnostics or metaphysicians; and at this time the very name of metaphysics had become so detested in England that the choice could not be doubtful.

In other ways agnosticism, its meaning once grasped or even dimly suspected, seemed well suited to the generally businesslike and sensible character of the English middle-class. After all, the lesson of Socrates has been better learned in England than in any other European country, to this extent, at least, that special knowledge and efficiency have bred the conceit of omniscience less here than elsewhere. Against this modesty we must of course set the delusion, also peculiarly English, that success in one line argues sound judgment in all, so that a popular poet comes to be thought an authority in philosophy, and a popular statesman an authority in Greek scholarship or in theology. But on the whole the objects of such undiscriminating confidence are wise enough to recognise their own limitations, and to refuse the embarrassing position of universal referees.

Assuming this judicious habit of self-limitation as a national characteristic, agnosticism will easily be recognised as no more than an extension of the same principle to the human understanding in its whole reach and depth. It will be remembered that the typical English philosopher, Locke, set forth as the very object of his great work to determine what human understanding could and could not achieve. Like all first attempts, his Essay went but a little way, and sometimes wandered from the right path. But the method, once indicated, was not forgotten, agreeing well as it did with the popular traditions of self-restraint and avoidance of extremes. Neither the doubt of Montaigne, nor the dogmatism of Descartes, nor the jugglery by which Kant and Hegel attempted in different ways to combine the two, could permanently be accepted among us. Goethe's Faust flings aside all learning in disgust and derision because he cannot attain omniscience; Goethe's Wagner claims to know much, and would fain know everything; an English student in the same position might say, 'I know something, I wish to

know more, but there are things which neither I nor any one else can ever hope to know.'

The first feeling of religious believers on the appearance of this shadowy enemy was made up of bewilderment and dismay. In one of his very greatest speeches, delivered years after its first advent, Gladstone gave expression to that early sentiment, which he had not outgrown, by denouncing agnosticism as more dangerous to religion than atheism. Many identified the two, while others confounded agnosticism with scepticism in the Greek sense, that is with universal uncertainty and doubt. Since then a more conciliatory attitude has been adopted; and the acknowledged chief of the agnostic school seems in a fair way to be accepted as a great religious teacher.

Huxley, as I have said, first coined the name; and although his definition of it is utterly unsatisfactory, no other thinker so truly represented what in practice he used it to imply. But the thing itself received its world-wide currency from Herbert Spencer, who at once accepted the word agnosticism as designating his own religious position, and to whom I have accordingly referred as the chief of the school. Leading positions are generally won by some sacrifice of principle; and so, just as Luther was hardly a genuine Protestant, or Kant a genuine critic of reason, Spencer fails to furnish the purest type of what through life he professed to be. In fact, his philosophy of religion is an illogical blend of reason and faith, which, as such, finds its proper place among the various schemes of compromise and conciliation characteristically put forward by English thought when the religious revolution had entered on its acute phase.

When we last met Herbert Spencer, it was as one of the restorers of English philosophy in the fifties: like Robert Chambers and Baden Powell, an advocate of development against special creation; like Bain, an advocate of the analytical psychology which resolves human reason into more elementary forms of consciousness against the scholastic idea of special faculties; like Mill and Buckle, an advocate of natural law in human actions against the incalculable capriciousness of free-will. The total tendency taken up and carried on by these illustrious thinkers, may be described as a return to the

Benthamite tradition. It stood for reason against authority, for human welfare against class-prejudices and class-interests, for progress against mediaevalism, for modern science against romanticist mythology and sentimentalism, for popular government against oligarchy and despotism, for free-trade against protection. To these characteristics must be added a keen interest in education, not peculiar to any one party, but admitting the widest divergencies in the views held about its object and organisation.

A more special point of contact between Spencer and Bentham was their common zeal for law-reform, for ending that iniquitous system which, as a rule, makes it safer to submit to injuries than to seek for their redress by legal means. In this respect Dickens alone among his contemporaries can be compared with the author of 'Social Statics' for his passionate attacks on the abuses created and maintained by the legal profession in England.

In Bentham, however, this reforming zeal was associated with a passion for the minute regulation of human life, as a consequence of which his spontaneous affinities were with autocracy far more than with individual liberty. It has been shown in a previous chapter that only under the influence of party-considerations, and under the guidance of James Mill, did his system become identified with the economics of *laisser-faire*, and with the radical programme of political enfranchisement. Among his disciples, on the other hand, the love of free individuality became a genuine passion, fed from sources totally unconnected with the teaching or influence of their aged chief. There was the permanent tradition of English liberty maintained by Tories no less than by Whigs. There was the worship of nature as distinct from convention, with its roots stretching far back to Stoic and Cynic philosophies of self-reliance. There was literary romanticism under the form of originality, variety, local colour, release from rule. Above all, there was the Revolution, with its inexhaustible suggestions of change, giving a certain charm of freakish audacity to the principle of utility in Charles Austin, as well as to the pedantry of the Tractarian movement in Hurrell Froude. All these impulses acted on Herbert Spencer, combined in his case with the inheritance of a stubborn Nonconformity from both parents, to make him the apostle

of an individualist philosophy. But to understand his position fully other and remoter influences must be taken into account.

Wordsworth told Emerson, much to the silent amusement of the younger sage, that England had embodied all Plato's Republic,[1]—presumably in her political and social institutions. According to an eastern fable, the camel is everything that a discontented horse once wished to be; and perhaps that useful but uncouth animal bears a not more remote resemblance to the noblest of all quadrupeds than our army and Church bear to the guardians of Plato's ideal State. Anyhow, it remains true that England, including her American prolongation, has been more prolific of literary utopias than any country in the world. Thus in one way, if not in another, there is a certain truth about Wordsworth's boast. And it so happened that, together with Bentham's sober programme of legal reform, the second half of the eighteenth century saw the utopia of human perfectibility first originated and worked out by two English philosophers, Priestley and Godwin.

Priestley, writing in 1768, declares that the species is progressing towards perfection, that 'the series of gradual changes which have brought us to our present happy condition, if supposed to go on, will probably carry us to a pitch of happiness of which we can as yet form no conception.'[2] Now, the remarkable thing is not so much that he should have anticipated this blissful consummation as that he, a Christian minister, should expect it to be realised by the unaided efforts of humanity, by trial, failure, repeated trial, and eventual success. Thus the fundamental condition for its attainment is not more government, or such a Spartan system of education as was advocated by his contemporary, Dr. Brown, but more liberty. 'Mankind should be, as far as possible, self-taught.'

Godwin's 'Political Justice' also chiefly consisted in letting people alone, in leaving them to follow the dictates of their private judgment; and this even to the extent of abolishing all

[1] Emerson's 'English Traits,' p. 280. Emerson himself admits elsewhere (*op. cit.*, p. 226) that 'the influence of Plato tinges the British genius.'

[2] 'Essay on the First Principles of Government,' p. 135.

punishment. His book was written during the most violent period of the French Revolution, but in a spirit opposite to that which animated the Terrorists. Everything is to be done by a peaceful propaganda of reason, nothing by force, nothing even by the concerted efforts of numbers banded together as a party; for to enrol one's self in a party is to sacrifice one's individual judgment.

Godwin agreed with Bentham in making the greatest happiness of the greatest number the end of action and the test of morality. But he held aloof from the Benthamite school as from all other schools, sympathising even to some extent more with Coleridge than with the utilitarians and economists. Malthus, one of their great oracles, had indeed first come forward as an opponent of Godwin's philosophy; and Bentham can have had nothing but contempt for his arguments against the infliction of punishment.

Nevertheless, Godwin must be counted, even more than Bentham, among the intellectual ancestors of Herbert Spencer; and nothing better attests Spencer's marvellous synthetic power than that he should have succeeded in welding together two philosophies at first sight so opposed as the 'Theory of Legislation' and the 'Political Justice.'[1]

Even so, we have not exhausted the antecedents of his system. Already in 'Social Statics' he warmly upholds the moral sense against utilitarian criticism as an ethical appeal; and this is only a single instance of the prominence given throughout his writings to instinct and feeling as the safest guides to action, in opposition to the practical rationalism of the eighteenth century; or rather it is a reinterpretation of that century's nature-worship. Similarly he agrees with the *a priori* school in accepting intuition as an indispensable element of knowledge, while explaining it by the organisation of ancestral experience in the nervous system.

I have already mentioned how Spencer, like Darwin and Wallace, took the Malthusian law of population as the basis of his theory of organic evolution, although, apart from one

[1] Spencer may never have read Godwin; but he must have conversed with others who kept up the anarchic tradition. His 'Autobiography' most unfortunately tells us next to nothing about the intellectual influences which determined his opinions.

passing glimpse, it did not lead him, as it led them, to the discovery of natural selection. Brain-power is developed by unlimited competition, and in its turn diminishes fecundity, until reproduction falls to the degree just necessary for the maintenance of the species in full strength. In fact, what to them as naturalists was a problem in zoology, to him, as a practical philosopher, was a problem in ethics. If nature is always right, how can the strongest of natural instincts be so egregiously mistaken as the economists pretend? In point of fact she is quite right, and knows her business better than they do.

Thus was removed the one exception to the beneficent action of natural law, so zealously inculcated by the English school of political economy. In this instance popular sentiment went along with the new optimism, however widely popular practice might depart from it. But no such support was extended to Spencer's way of dealing with another outstanding anomaly. Without going the extreme length of Godwin's anarchism, which would have abolished all government, or at least all compulsion whatever, the Benthamite economists tended to limit the functions of the state to the defence of life and property against foreign enemies and internal aggression. Such indeed had been the tradition of Whiggism ever since Locke; and as a principle it had been powerfully reinforced after the great Reform Act by the agitation against commercial restrictions, and by the growing impatience of religious disabilities in every form. But at the same time a sudden difficulty was raised in the way of its complete application by the new cry, so characteristic of modern democracy, for such an extension of national education as only the national exchequer could support. Now, Englishmen are not quite so illogical as is sometimes supposed; and in this instance, as also in the matter of factory legislation, they felt the necessity of reconciling the two demands, on the one side for more individualism, and on the other side for more state-interference. Macaulay, writing as a Whig philosopher in the 'Edinburgh Review,' and speaking as member of a Whig administration in Parliament, provided a fair working solution of the difficulty by pleading that education was a good thing in itself which government could further without injury to its primary end—the protection of

person and property—and what was more, with advantage to that end, education being conducive to orderly habits.[1]

Herbert Spencer would admit of no such exception, and would tolerate no such plea. He denied that a school education made the people more moral, and he maintained that state-education was self-defeating. It took so much from self-supporting parents in taxes that they could no longer afford to pay for the proper instruction of their children. Speaking generally, government could not go beyond its primary object without injury to that object. By taking money out of the pockets of the people for purposes in which some of them were not interested, it violated those very rights of property which it exists to uphold. Nor does the evil end there. A public provision for the education of the people acts as a direct encouragement to the idle, the thriftless, the extravagant, and the incompetent, by relieving them to that extent from responsibility for their offspring; while it lays a proportionate handicap on their more deserving fellow-citizens. In other words, like all protection, it promotes the survival of the unfittest.

Thus we are led back, or rather led on, by another road to the theory of organic evolution, which is again exhibited in close connexion with English principles of individualism and personal freedom, illustrating in this way the very process of continuous derivation whose universality it proclaims. Evolution is free competition generalised; and it is also paid private education generalised—a cosmic process of learning exactly what the pupil wants to know that he may earn his living and get on in the world. Every fibre and cell in the nervous system stands for a lesson learned in that stern school, where idleness and insubordination, stupidity and forgetfulness, are visited by a self-acting machinery with immediate suffering and eventual expulsion.

The power and suggestiveness of what Spencer calls the sociological method are not limited to these applications. Before the idea of progressive development had been accepted in biology,

[1] I may notice that Taine, whose aptitude for general ideas will not be denied, is content to take his philosophy of government from Macaulay's Essay on Gladstone's 'Church and State.' (H. Taine, 'Vie et Correspondance,' Tome III., p. 331.)

as accounting for the successive appearance of more and more perfect organisms in the records of geologic time, it already reigned in the sciences of human nature, and especially in the comparative study of economic phenomena, inaugurated by Adam Smith. That great master places increasing division of labour in the very front of his analysis, as the prime cause of labour's increasing efficiency; and the same principle lies at the bottom of the whole free-trade argument. Most wealth is accumulated and the community is best served when each individual is set to the work for which he is best fitted by nature or training, and when each country is devoted to the production of what its inhabitants are relatively best fitted to supply.

This law was recovered rather than discovered by Adam Smith, who may have been struck by the prominence given to it in Plato's 'Republic.' Plato himself used the law chiefly as a criticism on the democracies of his own time, pointing out that the business of war and government could not be efficiently performed unless it were entrusted to a class of citizens specially selected and trained for the purpose. But at a very early period of Greek thought the same principle had received a still wider extension. Two prae-Socratic philosophers, Anaxagoras and Diogenes of Apollonia, had already proclaimed progressive differentiation as the secret of that world-wide process by which order is evolved out of chaos. And Aristotle, coming after Plato, pointed out with wonderful sagacity that the higher animals differ from the lower by the more complete appropriation of each organ to a single function. Unfortunately Aristotle rejected the doctrine of transformism, and therefore his brilliant generalisation remained a mere curiosity of natural history. And similarly the great French zoologist, Milne-Edwards, when he revived the principle of the physiological division of labour in the middle of the last century, refused to accept the doctrine of organic evolution with which it is manifestly connected.

Herbert Spencer not only recognised the connexion, but, unconsciously returning to the Ionian standpoint, declared increasing differentiation to be the law of all evolution, from the formation of stellar systems to the more perfect adjustment of social relations to human needs. For him, as for Plato, the whole theory had its root in practical interests. True, the

Greek thinker's object had been to restrict the interference of individuals with government, while the English thinker's object was to restrict the interference of government with individuals. But the conviction that increased efficiency goes with increased specialisation was common to both. Were the whole energy of those in power devoted to maintaining order and enforcing rights, we should not, Spencer thought, see such legal abuses as those denounced by Bentham and Dickens.

Industrial progress points to another principle not less important than the division of labour. We may call it centralisation. In some ways this is merely another side of differentiation. Division of labour is only made possible by co-operation among the workers who unite to supply each other's wants by exchanging the commodities they respectively produce. But production on a large scale necessitates in addition the creation of a controlling centre, allotting to each his proper share of labour and its reward. Up to a certain point the same central agency can perform this office as cheaply for an increased number of hands; so it becomes more profitable to do business on a large than on a small scale; and the resulting tendency of industrial progress is made familiar to all by the appearance of joint-stock companies, trusts, combines, and the like.

Spencer showed that the same tendency towards consolidation obtains also in organic development, as evinced both by the evolution of each individual from the parent germ, and in a less obvious manner by a comparison between species on a higher and a lower grade in the living scale. In his general philosophy the two parallel processes, originally suggested by economic science, are distinguished as differentiation and integration, terms borrowed from the language of the higher mathematics. Stated generally, Spencer's law of evolution is that loose aggregates of like things tend to pass into coherent aggregates of unlike things.

To say that things generally behave in a certain manner is to give the law of their action. If they cannot be conceived as acting otherwise, no further question need be asked. But if, as is far more frequently the case, they might with equal facility be conceived as acting in some quite different fashion, philosophers require a reason why, they ask what is the cause of the law, or, in words that come to the same thing, what is the reason of it,

We do not want to know why mass and energy neither come into existence nor pass out of it. We do want to know why every particle of matter gravitates to every other particle, and why gravitation should be transmitted with a velocity which, if not infinite, at any rate enormously exceeds the velocity of light.

There is no difficulty in explaining why increasing differentiation and integration should be the law of economic evolution. The solution is given in one word: it pays. Labour is made more productive by division. Capital is made more productive by being employed on a large scale. And the same principle applies to living organisms in the stricter sense. In plants and animals, as in human societies, physiological division of labour and unity of direction, being favourable to assimilation and reproduction, attack and defence, confer a corresponding benefit on the species in which they are most developed, and therefore constitute an element of success in the universal competition for the means of subsistence.

So far, so good. But the case seems widely different when we turn from the living to the non-living, from the organic to the inorganic world. Here, except in a highly metaphorical sense, there is neither birth nor death; the machinery is not driven round by hunger and love. The stars in their courses, the elements in their elective affinities, the strata in their subsidence and upheaval, must obey other than economic laws.

Yet evolution is predicated of these also; and the fact of their being subject to it was recognised at a time when most naturalists still maintained the fixity of species. At this day we think that we can speak with more confidence about the origin and transformation of the heavenly bodies and of the earth's crust, their first causes and final issues, than about phenomena of the same name in the world of life. Nor is this strange. For in dealing with inorganic nature we have to do with energies and structures incomparably simpler than those involved in the most rudimentary of living organisms. Whatever changes they run through have long been explicable without an appeal to supernatural intervention. Even where direct evidence of change is not available, as in the case of the solar system, philosophers could safely argue from general analogies not only that the present state of things has not

always existed, but also that it came into existence by the operation of mechanical causes.

I have said that only in a highly metaphorical sense can birth and death be attributed to inorganic bodies. The question now suggests itself whether we can speak of them with more propriety as having been evolved. At any rate, it would seem as if in their case the word must lose the peculiar significance associated with it in biology. Let us pause for a moment to consider in what that significance consists.

As people commonly talk about evolution the process is sufficiently constituted by a series of continuous changes accomplished by the inherent energies of the aggregate within which they occur. That is to say, there need be no definite cycle of changes following one another in a certain invariable order. Or each group of evolving phenomena may have its own law, not necessarily resembling the course described by another group. We can quite well conceive that the solar system while in process of formation may have passed through a series of phases having nothing in common with the series of geological periods marking the successive stages in the physical history of our planet; while these again may have had no sort of analogy with the development of plant and animal life accompanying and partly determined by them. On any theory a great gulf separates the organic from the inorganic world; and there would be nothing wonderful in the discovery that this disparity expressed itself in a radical difference between their respective modes of evolution. The laws, if any, of inorganic evolution might be as difficult to formulate as the causes of organic evolution assuredly are to ascertain.

Not very long since a way out of this difficulty lay open and inviting, which is now closed to science. Many believed, and perhaps not a few still believe, that the material universe has an end, none the less foreseen and designed for being worked out by mechanical means. That purpose, it was thought, is the perfection of man. The scene of this glorious consummation might be placed in another world, as by Hartley, or in this world, as by Priestley: in any case, the steps towards it are largely material, and as such fall under the dominion of scientific reasoning. To become perfect man must exist, must have a physical organisation, with an environment to correspond,

and whatever else such a condition implies. To serve as his dwelling-place the earth must have passed through a long series of preparatory stages. If his body has been evolved from a lower animal body, and that again from others still less perfect, for the support and development of this long-drawn chain, the hypothesis presupposes a succession of appropriate environments. Finally, the earth presupposes a solar system with all the astronomical conditions of its formation and maintenance through immeasurable ages.

This, which is what philosophers call a teleological interpretation of evolution, gives unity to all its processes, organic and inorganic, by referring all alike to a common end. But beyond this end they need have nothing in common, any more than the successive processes by which a manufactured article is prepared and put on the market need resemble one another.

It is hardly necessary to say that the teleological hypothesis fell to pieces with the advent of evolutionism in its modern form. According to the doctrine now in vogue, events are always determined by their antecedents, never by their consequents. Mill's law of universal causation has been carried to its logical conclusion. At any moment of time the state of the universe depends neither on a future state nor on the prevision of such a state, but solely on its past states. What reasonable beings do in the way of designing and providing for their future welfare is no exception to the rule. What we call acting for an end is action prompted by a remembered pleasure or pain. This view is known as the theory of mechanical causation.

Of the mechanical view, so understood, Herbert Spencer was an enthusiastic partisan, and none has worked it out in such minute detail. If, therefore, evolution through all its stages was to be interpreted as one and the same process, some kind of unifying conception had to be discovered other than reference to a common end. Notwithstanding their obvious contrasts, the inorganic had to be assimilated to the organic process, or *vice versâ*.

On the purely mechanical view, as Spencer himself reminds us, evolution amounts to no more than a rearrangement of matter and motion. Moving masses may be either brought together or separated; and their structures and movements may become

more like or more unlike one another. There must be either integration or disintegration, differentiation or assimilation. No other alternative is admissible. In point of fact all four processes occur in every variety of combination through the whole history of evolution. But, unfortunately for the interests of philosophy, Spencer's primary interest in economic phenomena, coupled with his interest in personal liberty, led him to seek for the laws of development in the first instance under the head of differentiation alone, and then under the head of integration as merely another aspect of this Now, plants and animals are but very imperfectly accounted for by the physiological division of labour; while stellar systems, planets, and terrestrial physiography, apart from life, cannot be accounted for by it at all, seeing that they have no labour to divide. Division of labour must then first of all be abstracted into the very meagre notion of differentiation to make it fit inorganic phenomena; and then it can only be stretched to cover them by ignoring the facts of assimilation, or else by arbitrarily calling them integration.

Now, the most remarkable thing about the Synthetic Philosophy is the way in which it surreptitiously plays on our surviving teleological beliefs so as to make this sophistry pass unperceived. The separation of a supposed primitive nebula into sun, planets, satellites, and comets; of the earth into crust and nucleus; of the crust into mountains, plains, ocean-beds, continents, islands, and so forth, gets itself described as differentiation, seeming in this way to fall into one unbroken series with the processes characterised by Milne-Edwards and Adam Smith. And so long as we look on the sun as the source of heat, light, and gravitation for the planets; on the planets as predestined seats of life; and on their surface-configurations as bound to subserve life's various purposes, in short as *useful*, such a description may pass muster. But from the moment that we put aside future vital interests as irrelevant, the incompleteness and arbitrariness of such an interpretation becomes manifest.

For example, whatever may have been the origin of the planets, the course of their subsequent evolution has been such as to make them not more but less unlike the sun, by shaping them into revolving globes, accompanied in many instances by a train of attendant bodies. So also the life-history of our earth

might with at least as much reason be called a process of assimilation as of differentiation. Its diurnal and annual revolutions are slowly approaching a condition of equality which, given a sufficiently long duration for the solar system, must be at last attained. Such an assimilation of the axial to the orbital movements has been already reached by the moon, and also, as is supposed, by Mercury and Venus. Again, as the earth cools the temperature and consistency of its body at different depths tend to become more uniform; while its superficial inequalities tend to disappear under the abrading action of tides and streams; and as with the loss of internal energy fewer and fewer new inequalities are created, this process is bound to continue until a dead level and a uniform distribution of water over the whole globe is produced. Spencer himself, to a certain extent, recognises the existence of such assimilating processes, and even finds a place for them in his system under the name of equilibration, which, according to him, is the limit of evolution. But the balancing of opposed forces will not account for every instance of assimilation—this being a law of structures as well as of movements—and, even if it did account for all such cases, would merely go to prove that the homogeneous may be stable, whereas Spencer's whole system rests on a supposed demonstration of its instability. In fact nothing is stable, neither the homogeneous nor the heterogeneous, but all things, as Heracleitus said, are in a continual flux.

Neither is it legitimate to class off the tendencies to differentiation as peculiarly characteristic of evolution, and the tendencies to assimilation as peculiarly characteristic of immobility or of dissolution. For whatever phase of the whole world-process we may think fit to call evolution, it seems certain that everywhere these two operations are carried on side by side, and are alternately instrumental to one another. Whatever comes under the categories of diffusion or imitation might be quoted in illustration of this truth. Individuals and nations, after starting from widely different standpoints and developing very diverse forms of culture, are brought into contact, exchange products and ideas, rub off each other's angles, pursue the same objects, and, after a more or less prolonged period of approximation, perhaps end by developing, each on its own account, some new form of originality. We need

not go far for an example: the twofold process may be seen at work between Europe and Asia.[1]

Similarly with integration and disruption. Spencer uses the former term with a looseness and vagueness astonishing even for him, employing it to cover all the cases of assimilation that might otherwise be quoted with fatal effect against his original definition of progress; as, for instance, when science is advanced by bringing apparently diverse phenomena under a common law. And indeed when we quit the economic field —economy being understood so as to include physiological no less than industrial processes of nutriment—integration will be found a most difficult word to connect with a meaning applicable to all orders of phenomena. We may take as characteristic types, at one end of the evolutionary scale such a process as the condensation of diffused matter into stars or planets, and at the other end such a one as the unification of Italy or Germany. In the one case, by hypothesis, a violent centrifugal movement was set up, tending towards renewed disruption, and accompanied by loss of energy; in the other there was increased cohesion, and an enormous accumulation of energy—at least if military power and wealth are to be counted as such. Integration, in Spencer's view, only amounts to evolution in the complete sense when it is accompanied by increased differentiation in the parts combined. But through the whole course of what is called inorganic evolution, assimilation has been shown to play no less important a part than differentiation, and the same holds true in politics. The modern states based on a common language, literature, and tradition are more homogeneous than the agglomerations which they have superseded; and the likeness of their component parts tends to become still more marked.

What has been said of differentiation and assimilation is true also of integration (in the sense of consolidation) and disruption. They either alternate or go together through the whole world-process, contributing in about equal shares to that particular 'arrangement of matter and motion' in which we now

[1] I need hardly say that the late M. Gabriel Tarde made this cosmic law of assimilation peculiarly his own; but I may mention that he theorised in avowed opposition to Herbert Spencer. This line of criticism, however, occurred to me before I knew anything of Tarde's writings. In my opinion both the English and the French philosopher are thoroughly one-sided; nor could we construct a complete view by merely putting their theories together.

find ourselves placed. Each is a means to the other, and the same end may result equally from either. Our satellite was detached from the parent globe; the moons of other planets are supposed to have originated by adoption, by the consolidation of loose meteoric masses, drawn into the orbit of what are now their primaries, and assimilated to them, at least to the extent of being shaped into revolving spheres. The separation of her North American colonies from England brought about a great increase of commercial intercourse between the members of the whole Anglo-Saxon group. The consolidation of the Union following on the Secession War led to precisely similar consequences within the American Continent.

Spencer described the primitive nebula and the primitive molten globe as relatively homogeneous. In our ignorance of what their actual constitution was they doubtless seem so to the mind's eye; but, for aught we know, it may have been enormously more diversified than the arrangements which succeeded that earliest condition. And as compared with our present still rather picturesque civilisation, the ultimate stage of human evolution may present a uniform, not to say monotonous, spectacle to the millennial observer.

Such were some among the fatal consequences of extending to all phenomena a formula applicable only to industrial evolution. But the mischief did not end there. Inorganic phenomena were no sooner admitted within the pale, and subjected to cruel distortion by a false adaptation to the laws of life, than they revenged themselves by a similar perversion of organic truth. In astronomical and geological history a leading fact is the consolidation of matter accompanied by a loss of energy, which is dissipated into surrounding space under the form of heat. To us, indeed, with our persistent teleology, it is *the* leading fact; for by no other natural process could the earth have become a fit abode for living creatures, and eventually for man; while in all probability the same process will eventually bring, first civilisation and then all life to an end. As regards vital and social evolution, however, the case seems different. Whenever living substances are built up out of their inorganic elements there is not dissipation but storage of energy, or rather the dissipation, when it occurs, is an incidental accompaniment,

the storage an essential part of the process. At each stage of its growth the individual possesses a greater amount of energy than at the previous stage; and the same, I presume, holds good in comparing higher with lower species in the same line of development. Even if more be not actually present, the amount possessed is more economically employed, and is therefore practically greater. If this applies to physiological development, it applies still more closely to the higher evolution, to the progress of civilisation in all its forms. Wherever there is material, moral, intellectual, or aesthetic advance, there is either an increase or a saving of energy, the addition of a plus or the subtraction of a minus quantity. As is well known, we gain this augmented energy almost entirely from the sun's rays, dissipation in one part of the universe being the condition of accumulation in another, just as assimilation combines with differentiation, disruption with integration, to keep the cosmic process for ever on foot.

Facts so familiar need only the most summary reference, and to none can they have been more familiar than to Spencer himself. What is more, their recognition would have left intact the results reached by him in each special field of enquiry, whatever may be, in other respects, the value of these. We have then to ask why his general systematisation should have been so contrived as to exclude half the truth. No doubt the passion for unification will account for much. But the assimilation of organic to inorganic phenomena is connected with more concrete interests, whose influence we have now to examine.

I have already pointed out the different ways in which the two orders of evolution are related to the ideas of cause and law. The facts of life proceed in an orderly sequence and constitute a cycle of changes, easier to formulate than to account for. All other facts seem to occur by mechanical necessity; but, except as means to life and intelligence, they do not easily lend themselves to any unifying interpretation. In reference, however, to the conflict between theology and science, causation, in the sense of mechanical necessity, was much more important than order and law where the problems of life were concerned. Inorganic evolution, or rather transformation, was accepted

without difficulty by men of science, and even by theologians, as something that could be accounted for by the operation of ordinary physical agencies; whereas the origin of species and of life itself could, as was thought, be explained by nothing short of supernatural intervention. Now, by assimilating the two series, which in reality were so widely contrasted, our philosopher hoped, in a subconscious way, to gain the same sort of ideal control over the almost insoluble problems of life that science already exercised over stellar and terrestrial origins. If he could but establish the same law for all changes, then nothing seemed more plausible than that they should have a common cause, and that this should be purely mechanical. It was as if in the exchange between Diomed and Glaucus the armour of each had acquired the qualities of that for which it was given—as if the power of bronze to resist and penetrate had by some magic art been combined with the splendour and preciousness of gold.

Nor was the speculative interest of the new method its only recommendation. There was a practical interest also, and this had been at work at an even earlier period than Spencer's adoption of the development-hypothesis, contributing indeed very considerably to his adoption of that hypothesis, and converting it for him into a moral certainty. Brought up in the very thick of the anti-corn-law and anti-outdoor-relief agitation, our young philosopher had been early imbued with the gospel of self-reliance and passionate hostility to State-interference. His training as an engineer familiarised him with mechanical ideas, with condensed and potent formulae. We can see these various influences acting in combination as the inspirers of his first great work, 'Social Statics,' whose very title betrays the mechanician. Perfected human society is there conceived under the form of an equilibrium. It is to realise Priestley's dream of future felicity and Godwin's ideal of political justice by the completest development of individuality co-existing with the most inviolable respect of all for the rights of each. Harmony with ourselves, harmony with each other, harmony with the environment—these were to be the great words of the future; words familiar enough to all philosophy, but representing ideals sought before by other means, by a religious and literary education, by a more or less military discipline, by a return to

classical or mediaeval tradition, by encouraging natural instincts under the idea that nature was perfect. Spencer looked to science for the best intellectual training; to modern industry rather than to ancient militarism as supplying the best standards of conduct, to nature interpreted by the idea of progress, rather than to nature stereotyped and eternal, as the true guide. He was one of those who in looking for their father's asses find a kingdom—in this instance the kingdom of evolution considered as an education of the human race by gradual adaptation to its environment. We have seen in another connexion how the conception worked itself out in his 'Law of Population' and in the first form of his 'Psychology.' The latter speaks of a movement 'which is bearing humanity onward to perfection,' with an enthusiasm more chastened but not less profound than Shelley's. What we have to note here is that the chain of evolution hangs from its future attachment, from an ethical ideal mechanically conceived. Now, if organic evolution affords the best and most promising type of movement towards an ideal, inorganic steadfastness affords the most appropriate type of its attainment in the moving equilibrium of the solar system; and that equilibrium had been attained by integration of matter and dissipation of motion, unbalanced force being got rid of by the latter process.

Nor was this all. The great inorganic agencies, gravitation and radiation, are just those whose courses, defying all interference, can be predicted with the utmost assurance, and give the deepest impression of self-sufficing cosmic energy. Thus there was, so to speak, a cosmic guarantee for Shelley's confident prediction that man's 'age of endless peace' should 'surely' if not, as he thought, 'swiftly come,' 'and the unbounded all remain without a flaw.' The stars in their courses fought for human perfection. Above all, ignorant legislators, though they might delay, could not permanently prevent its advent. What government of the people by the people was failing to accomplish for the people, liberation of the individual by the individual for the individual would inevitably achieve.

Thus by a supreme effort of generalisation the philosophy of *laisser-faire* was extended to the whole universe, involving the substitution of mechanical for teleological causation in all orders

of phenomena. Just as the industrial organisation of society had built itself up stone by stone, solely through the unguided action of individual desires in fruitful interplay with an indifferent or hostile environment, so by an analogous process, and wholly without supernatural assistance, had the minds and bodies of those individuals been gradually evolved from their inorganic elements. The 'Vestiges' had admitted, and even insisted on, a divine purpose in creation; Darwin, while silently superseding, had not openly denied such a purpose; Spencer formally repudiated it wherever such a notion crossed his path.

So far, then, as theology was concerned, it might seem as if the author of 'First Principles' had merely worked out in detail that destructive action of reason on religious belief already implied in the law of universal causation placed at the basis of induction by the author of a 'System of Logic.' Baden Powell, accepting evolution before Darwin's 'Origin of Species' appeared, had left no argument for the existence of God but the order of nature, which he professed to regard as conclusive evidence of a superintending mind. Spencer showed that the existence and maintenance of this order was a corollary from the conservation of energy, which again was an axiom needing no other proof than the impossibility of expelling it from consciousness. And now that liberty of speech had been won for all Englishmen by the heroism of a few liberal clergymen, nothing seemed to prevent Mill's successor on the philosophic throne from openly proclaiming, as Comte had done, the substitution of science for theology and metaphysics. He might even have taken up this position with more assurance than Comte, who, by refusing to discuss the origin of species, had left it as a refuge for religious speculation.

Such an attitude need not, any more than Comte's, have identified itself with the dogmatic atheism of D'Holbach or of Bentham. While absolutely excluding the existence of an interfering creator like the God of Catholic Christianity and of Islam, the synthetic philosophy might have refused to account for the ultimate origin and meaning of mind, matter, and force, as lying outside human experience. This, as already pointed out, would have been pure agnosticism, but it would not be an adequate description of Spencer's creed. He neither had broken, nor did he desire to break, with all religious belief to

such an extent as that. Brought up on the edge of the great religious revival, he had not escaped its influence. With all his professed hostility to teleology there is, I think, a survival of teleological ideas in his misguided efforts to bring inorganic phenomena under a common law of evolution, that fatal gift, like the girdle of Ajax, by which dead nature is bound to the triumphant chariot-wheels of an anarchic individualism. And perhaps there is even more of it in the method of studying evolution in reference to its supposed final stage rather than as an exponent of cosmic continuity, mechanical causation being, like Hector's sword, the weapon with which progress commits suicide.[1] Finally, we have the conviction that man is advancing to perfection, subsequently modified, but never falling below the expectation of a state much surpassing his present condition as regards virtue and happiness. True, Spencer justifies his expectation on mechanical principles, by interpreting happiness as an equilibrium, and evolution as a movement resulting in equilibration. But this very interpretation seems to point towards an optimistic disposition as its effective source.

Apart from this personal leaning towards theism, Spencer had an inherited English fondness for the conciliation of divergent principles which fell in admirably with his own extraordinary powers of synthesis and generalisation. Without going so far as to assert that this faculty constitutes the philosophic in contradistinction to the scientific character, we may at least claim for it a large place therein. More particularly the chief philosophies of the nineteenth century, to a greater degree than any others since neo-Platonism, have been marked by a tendency to mediate between opposite points of view. Attention has already been called to the presence of this constructive motive in the systems of Hegel and Comte; and the national characteristics of each thinker might be copiously illustrated by a comparison of their methods with Herbert Spencer's. Here it will be enough to observe that the Englishman's mode of adjusting differences does not consist, like the German's, in a bold identification of contradictions, nor like the Frenchman's, in assigning to theology and science respectively the absolute dominion over a distinct historical period, but agreeably to the more cautious and moderate genius

[1] Sophocles, 'Ajax,' 1026–35.

of his people, in seeking for a common ground between opposing views.

As between religion and science, Spencer found such a common ground in their common confession of ignorance about the ultimate conceptions on which they severally repose. All lines of thought, according to him, when pushed far enough back, lead to an ultimate mystery, to assumptions at once necessary, inexplicable, and even self-contradictory. He has been severely and not unjustly criticised for giving a positive value to what looks like a purely privative notion. Two ships out at sea would not be brought any nearer by satisfying their crews that both were sailing over an unfathomable ocean.

When a pure agnostic is taunted by his theological opponents with making a confession of nescience, he may fairly retort that by their own admission they know no more than he does about past eternity or actual infinity, either as independent realities or as predicates of an absolute substance. Their theism changes the name of the difficulty without removing it. But experience shows that this style of controversy, so far from reconciling the disputants, rather increases the exasperation of the religious believer and the contempt of the rationalist.

In point of fact, Herbert Spencer felt that his privative conception was hardly equal to the mediating office imposed on it; and so, at any sacrifice of logic, he tried to give it a positive significance. Philosophy has become familiar with it under the name of the Unknowable, the residual entity left in our hands when criticism has done its worst. He reaches it by various methods. Thought seems by its very nature to exclude the idea of an Absolute. To think is to condition, to represent things as like or unlike, as co-existent or as successive, but above all, as distinct from ourselves, as objects to our subject, modified by our mode of apprehending them, yet at the same time as independent of our apprehension, with a reality of their own. This reality, existing apart from all thought and perception, is the Absolute which logic and psychology oblige us to assume, but which by definition escapes all knowledge.

So also beyond the farthest reach of sense and imagination there must still be an existence to which no limit can be conceived, for the very idea of limitation implies something beyond, by which the finite is enclosed. This is the Infinite; and, like

the Absolute, it is inaccessible to consciousness, but at the same time consciousness cannot get rid of it.

Again, the ultimate root-conception of science is force, or what we now call energy. Force persists; that is to say, it can neither be increased nor diminished—a truth known *a priori*, and verified by our inability to conceive its contradictory. In the last analysis, force is what resists our voluntary efforts. Being outside consciousness, we cannot identify it with muscular tension or any other form of feeling. Thus we know that it exists, but not what it is. In asserting that it persists we assert an unconditioned reality without beginning or end.

Religion also proclaims such a reality under the name of God; and the highest development of religious philosophy—represented by Mansel's Bampton Lectures—comes to the conclusion that God in his true nature cannot be known or conceived. This, then, is the common ground between religion and science, the basis of their future reconciliation. Science takes phenomena for its field, and reduces them to invariable laws, with Spencer's own philosophy of evolution as its most comprehensive representative. Religion takes the unknowable cause, substance, and container of all things as the object of its characteristic emotions, an abiding realm of awe and mystery, an eternal beyond. This is the supreme differentiation of thought into two distinct masses, which at the same time are integrated into one complete system of philosophy.

Herbert Spencer was brought up among harmonies of Science and Scripture, which, no doubt, he learned to look on with supreme disdain. They have long been consigned to contempt and oblivion; but we may safely affirm that none among them all could have been so audacious in its assumptions, so illogical in its reasonings, or so hopelessly inacceptable to the parties at issue, as the scheme of reconciliation supplied by his own 'First Principles.' Every argument advanced in his criticism of theology, under its various forms of theism, pantheism, and atheism, might be turned with telling effect against his own dogmatic agnosticism. None of them, indeed, has ever been so overtly self-contradictory as to call the universe 'the manifestation of an Unknowable Power.' Nor is the matter mended by calling it 'an Infinite and Eternal Energy whence

all things proceed.' Nothing can proceed from an infinite energy, and that for two good reasons. There is no place left for it to proceed into, and if there were, the sum of the infinite would be increased by such procession, which is absurd. Nor does the rehabilitated Absolute cut a more satisfactory figure. An absolute reality can produce no states of consciousness in us, or anything in anything, or anything at all, without entering into relations, that is, without ceasing to be absolute. In fact, neither of these august entities, the Infinite and the Absolute, can appear in public with Causality under pain of instant loss of character. Then there is an embarrassing choice between infanticide and suicide. They must make away with the world of experience or themselves disappear. That is why the indeterminate mass of feeling left behind when the conditions imposed by thought are eliminated, has to figure alternately and inconsistently as a product of the Absolute, and as the Absolute itself. Nor can they part company with knowledge. To be infinite the Infinite must include all experienced things, all phenomena, all the knowable; where can we fix a limit at which these cease and the Unknowable begins? As to the Absolute, if it is responsible for the whole universe of experience, we know more about it than about any isolated phenomenon whatever, and in particular more than we shall ever know of our best friends, or even of ourselves.

The proofs that these conceptions answer to realities are as pitiable as the conceptions themselves. The relative, we are told, implies an absolute as its correlate. This is true in a sense, but not in Spencer's sense. Both are abstractions, and neither has more reality than belongs to an abstraction. Absolute monarchs, absolutely pure cocoa, and absolutely straight lines, are things which exist, or may at any rate be conceived as existing. But nobody except a Platonist—if indeed a Platonist would go so far—believes that there is an independent objective idea, called the Absolute, in which they participate and whence they derive their reality. What German philosophers meant by the Absolute is something quite different. It is the sum of all existence, the absolute whole as compared with which all minor wholes are only relative totalities. There is nothing either vague or self-contradictory about such a conception. It is readily suggested by our experience of minor wholes; and it

fulfils Spencer's own conditions of cognoscibility by being at once assimilated to these and differentiated from them. The real question is whether the universe is finite or infinite; and if infinite, can it be thought of as a totality? Grant the sum of existence to be finite, and *ipso facto* it becomes an absolute all; assume it to be infinite, and forthwith absoluteness must be restricted to the purity of Cadbury's cocoa, the Duke of Devonshire's political integrity, and the like. In any case, absoluteness as a conception remains perfectly comprehensible. So also does infinity, when used in the only legitimate sense, which is the mathematical sense. With regard to absolute and infinite things a distinction must be drawn. An absolute, that is to say, a finite world is ideally knowable, although in actual experience we may never get to the end of it. An infinite world, on the other hand, can never be known in all its details. But equally no one can ever prove that there are facts beyond the farthest attainable limits of space and time essentially different from the contents of our actual experience. So that we cannot say dogmatically whether there are unknowables or not.

So much for the unknowables connected with our ideas of absoluteness and infinity, or with our want of such ideas. We are certainly in a state of profound ignorance about the extent of the universe; but there is no warrant for correlating such ignorance with one or more mysterious entities, survivals of an idealism which Spencer heartily despised mixed up with a theology from which he could not shake himself free. We have now to consider the proofs of positive agnosticism derived from a direct analysis of consciousness.

Mind, according to Spencer, consists of feelings, and the relations between feelings—that is likeness, unlikeness, coexistence, and succession. Deducting the relations, feeling remains as a vague something of which we know that it is, but not what it is. Unknowables, of course, may be multiplied to any extent by abstracting from those elements of experience which alone make experience intelligible. At that rate every word in the language might be made the index to a fresh mystery, for no word has a real meaning in isolation from other words. During the infancy of dialectic various puzzles were constructed by a similar proceeding; but it is not on record

that they were offered as a support or a substitute for the fallen religion of Olympus.

What makes this abstraction of the contents of consciousness from its forms the more illegitimate is that the organising categories, likeness, etc., are themselves feelings, and are described as such by Spencer himself elsewhere. Thus the unity of composition between thought and its contents forbids the erection of either into an Absolute or an Unconditioned, even if the resulting abstraction could by any possibility acquire an objective value.

But the Unknowable is a Proteus, expelled from consciousness it reappears as the transcendent cause of consciousness, the objective correlate of our muscular feelings, the hidden cause of our fleeting sense-perceptions. Here there is the usual confusion of thought, the usual self-contradiction. From the physiological point of view the sensations, immediate or revived, out of which knowledge is built up, have their outward independent causes or antecedents. But the physiologist would be greatly surprised to hear that these antecedents, conditions, or whatever else he calls them, are unknowable. He professes to know a good deal, if not all, about them; and he might point to various passages in the 'Principles of Psychology' going to prove that its author admitted the validity of his pretensions. From the metaphysical point of view, on the other hand, no such reference is admissible. To the metaphysician consciousness is a self-evolving whole, complete in itself, containing, among other elements, that external world whence it is alleged to be derived. Such notions as externality, independence, and real existence cannot be used to destroy its absoluteness, being themselves products of reflexion, and no less part of ourselves than the emotions of vanity or shame. To set up an external cause of phenomena as the Absolute implied by relativity, or as the infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed, is indeed, as we have already seen, suicidal. For the sum of all existence must include consciousness, which, as Descartes observed, most certainly is, whatever else is not. And an infinite energy has nothing to create, or it would not be infinite.

Spencer himself habitually viewed consciousness as something evanescent, requiring an external object, material or otherwise, for its support. Berkeleyan idealism, were it true,

would, he thought, reduce evolution to a dream; and the assurances of the idealists that they accepted evolution seem only to have impressed him as an inconsistency. Yet his own inconsistency in laying down laws of evolution obtaining at a time when consciousness, as known to us, did not exist, is at least as great. To say that the conceptions of time, space, matter, motion, and force with which he operates are but symbols of an unknowable reality does not save the logical situation. What is unknowable cannot be symbolised. We only recognise appearances as symbols of realities when we know that for which they stand. And assuming material objects, the contents of space and time, the carriers of force, to be mere symbols, the presumption is that the things symbolised, if number be predicable of them at all, are as numerous as their sensible representations. Yet the Unknowable always figures as a singular noun in Spencer's pages; and he tries to find a reason for this conception of it as one, in the supposed unity of the physical forces, which really is no more than a correlation. We shall presently see that it is, in fact, derived from other than agnostic modes of thought. But before discussing this point, the religious side of the synthesis has to be considered.

Spencer seems to regard religion as an attempt to explain the universe, leading, so far as each particular explanation goes, to inevitable failure and despair; but leading also to the indestructible admission of a reality beyond experience. Were this a true reading, his philosophy, so far from differentiating religion and science, would rather tend to identify the two, at least in respect to their final results. On the points where they differ religion would cease to exist, by the mere fact that science had disproved and superseded its explanation of phenomena; while even the meagre office of referring phenomena to an unknowable cause is taken from faith and assigned to reason by Spencer himself. Spencerians, if there are any, may contend that the contrast lies not in the beliefs themselves, but in the emotions they excite; feelings of awe and mystery being, on the agnostic view, peculiarly associated with religion. But religious beliefs have no monopoly in this respect; according to Spencer's own admission such feelings can be equally associated with scientific truth. One of his own very last writings contains an

eloquent page on space and its properties, more particularly those revealed by the geometry of projection, where the relations thus disclosed are described in language, recalling that of the Psalmist, as something marvellous and astounding; space itself being characterised as a transcendent mystery, not because we are ignorant of its origin, but because—according to this singularly dogmatic agnostic—we are certain that it is without origin and without end. Here there is no mention of religion; and whereas religious emotion was before recommended as a thing to be preserved and cultivated by mankind, the contemplation of infinite and eternal space is spoken of as 'too overwhelming to be dwelt upon,' as generating a feeling of dislike and oppression.[1]

The truth is that the emotions of awe and mystery, apt to be generated by all intense and high speculation, become associated with joy and gladness in the religious mind precisely because it is not agnostic, because religious belief is, for the believer, a communion with the unseen, not a bare admission of God's existence combined with a hopeless ignorance of his attributes, but a bringing of those attributes themselves within the range of experience. Hence religion is nothing if not a revelation, given to the simple theist in the world and human life; to the heathen in immemorial traditions, omens, oracles, and apparitions; to the Catholic Christian in Scripture as interpreted by ecclesiastical authority; to the Protestant Christian in Scripture as interpreted by private judgment or private inspiration; to the mystic as a direct personal communication with the All-One, the centre and source of things. Spencer, when he first wrote about it, only knew religion under the debased sceptical form of Mansel's apology, or of the still more degraded ophelism which was its popular defence against rationalistic attacks. A mere glance at the more serious replies to Mansel would have taught him better.

For the origin of religion he accepted Hume's theory, generally current among freethinkers, and more highly elaborated by Comte. The weak point of this view is that it ignores the wide-spread and immemorial belief in immortality, which has always formed an important element in religion, both directly as leading to ancestor-worship, and indirectly as lifting the pretensions of mysticism above the restrictions of terrestrial

[1] 'Facts and Comments,' p. 205.

experience. In after years Spencer took up the theory of ancestor-worship with almost fanatical ardour, representing all religion as evolved from the provision originally made by savages for supplying the wants, averting the displeasure, or winning the favour of departed spirits, more particularly the ghosts of powerful chiefs. Wide differences of opinion still prevail among experts on the subject, and its scientific bearings are at any rate irrelevant to the present discussion. What interests us here is to notice that when Spencer came to recognise the immense importance of human survival as a religious idea, he should still have omitted all consideration of its claims from his professed reconciliation between religion and science. In the latest, as in the earliest edition of 'First Principles,' there is an ominous silence about this side of the question—a side which for many constitutes its sole importance. Here there is no comforting reservation of an ultimate mystery; not a chance of truth survives. Until a year before the philosopher's death that silence remained unbroken. Even then the interest seems to have been personal rather than philosophical. We are told, as something not generally recognised, that agnostics do not look on the approach of death with absolute indifference.[1] This will hardly come as a surprise to the general public, who seem rather inclined to think that agnostics view it with more concern than their Christian neighbours. They will be quite prepared to hear that the leading agnostic did not like the prospect. As might have been expected, he rather sadly rejects the idea of a future life. It originated in nothing better than the baseless savage superstition of 'a wandering double suggested by dreams which comes back on awaking and goes away for an indefinite time at death.' It is dispelled by our experience of the close connexion between brain and consciousness, and the absence of evidence that the latter can go on when the former has become inactive. What, then, becomes of consciousness, and what was it to begin with? 'We can only infer that it is a specialised and individualised form of that Infinite and Eternal Energy which transcends both our knowledge and our imagination; and that at death its elements lapse into the Infinite and Eternal Energy whence they were derived.'[2]

This is the old Hindoo doctrine of absorption, released from

[1] 'Facts and Comments,' p. 202. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

the superstition of metempsychosis. In other words, it is not agnosticism but pantheism. And just because of a certain subconsciousness on Spencer's part that it meant pantheism was the deliverance delayed so long. But all who could read between the lines and disregard misleading phrases must have discerned a strong pantheistic element in the earliest form of 'First Principles.' True the section on the Unknowable contains a passage in which pantheism is examined and rejected as self-contradictory. But in the first place it offers as a definition of the doctrine attacked one that few, if any, pantheists would accept; the idea that the universe is self-created. And in the next place the ultimate disproof of this, as of all other theologies, resolves itself into the assumption that self-existence is inconceivable—an assumption practically negated by Spencer's own doctrine of energy, supplemented by his assertions about space. The principles really most distinctive of pantheism are, that the universe is constituted as an absolute, self-sufficient, impersonal whole; that its unity becomes individualised and self-conscious in man; that, so conceived, it is an object of religious reverence; all religions, in fact, deriving whatever value they possess from the more or less overt recognition of this fundamental unity. So understood, pantheism has always offered the most obvious reconciliation between faith and reason, religion and science; and this explains why the agnostic compromise, after first breaking away from pantheism, inevitably gravitated back into its sphere of influence.

Herbert Spencer had apparently never read or even opened Spinoza. Yet the points in common between their systems are numerous and startling. The Infinite and Eternal Energy of 'First Principles' is the Power of the 'Ethica'; the coexistence in complete distinction of mind and matter reproduces the similar relation between the attributes of Thought and Extension; the unknowable nature of the Infinite Energy recalls the infinite attributes of Spinoza's one Substance, with two of which only can we ever be acquainted; the Persistence of Force with its evolutionary corollaries does but give more precision to the ideas of self-maintenance and of universal causation inherited by Spinoza from Stoicism. Both philosophers repudiate final causes; both give ethics a cosmic basis, involving a delicate balance between self-assertion and disinterestedness;

finally, both affect a religious colouring, while the greatly decreased intensity of that colouring in the more modern system betrays the extent to which rationalism has grown in the two centuries intervening between their eras.

The two are, in fact, related not only by analogy but also by descent; and to trace this descent is to explain why Spencer's pantheism is of so much less steady and sincere a type than Spinoza's. Speculating under the direct influence of Hamilton and Mansel, his chief, or rather his sole metaphysical teachers, Spencer naturally imbibed much of their animosity towards Schelling and Hegel, while at the same time receiving a sort of induction current from the objects of their attack. Falling on an intellect so splendidly endowed with the faculties of synthesis and generalisation, these remoter influences would inevitably tend to rearrange its ideas in accordance with Schelling's original model, which was the philosophy of Spinoza. That also had arisen from a number of heterogeneous sources, of which mysticism was one; but the training of the Jewish optician, like the training of the English engineer, enabled him to pick out just those elements of mysticism which most easily fit in with the lessons of positive science.

On certain points, however, Spencer approaches more nearly to theism than to pantheism. There are passages, as we have seen, where he identifies God, or the Unknowable, with the sum of all existence, including the individual consciousness as a part of the great whole. But there are others again where this mysterious power figures rather as the transcendent cause of things [1] than as their immanent substance, where the possibility is opened of its possessing something much higher than what we call personality,[2] where the individual is not a specialised form of the Unknowable, but an agency through which it works.[3]

On the other hand, there is much in the Spencerian philosophy to which those might appeal who regard it as definitely destructive of all religious belief. The formula of evolution is so constructed that the most determined atheist might safely

[1] 'First Principles,' Sect. 31.

[2] 'Is it not just possible that there is a mode of being as much transcending Intelligence and Will as these transcend mechanical motion?' 'First Principles,' Sect. 31, p. 109 (fifth ed.).

[3] *Op. cit.*, Sect. 34, p. 123 (fifth ed.).

accept it, so far as fidelity to mechanical principles of explanation is concerned. As we have seen, final causes are rigidly excluded; evidence of benevolent intention in the structure of living creatures is explicitly denied; religious sanctions are allowed no place in that highest type of character and conduct occasionally seen now, but reserved for future generations to make the heritage of all. And since the residual mystery in its ultimate form, which is the idea of space, only suggests painful reflexions, it seems that on Spencerian principles, according to which pain is wrong, our duty is, other things being equal, to keep out of the way of what produces it. In other words, it is a duty to keep religious emotion out of our lives.

To these indirect considerations of tendency and congruity must be added the perfunctory character of Spencer's argument against atheism. It amounts to no more than the inconceivability of self-existence. Now, this difficulty—admitting it to be a difficulty, which many will deny—applies also to the Infinite and Eternal Energy, or it does not. In the former case, what becomes of dogmatic agnosticism? In the latter case, what prevents the atheist from accepting the world and refusing to go a step beyond it? If twitted with not offering an explanation of what exists, he may fairly reply that none is needed, and that according to his opponent none can be conceived that would not equally require to be explained. If asked by what right he denies God's existence, he may reply with equal fairness that the burden of proof falls on the affirmative side. Divine activity is the necessary condition of belief in a divine being. Where no such activity makes itself felt, no such belief can be required. Appearances once quoted in evidence of it have been explained away by Spencer and others as the result of unconscious physical agencies. *Quod gratis asseritur gratis negatur.* A theory consistent with every known fact and open to no objections but what apply equally to every other theory, actual or conceivable, holds the field.

So far our resolute and uncompromising friend, with whom the belated Spencerian must be left to adjust his differences as best he may. There remains the element whence the whole system took its name, that is the element of pure agnosticism. Rhetorically the strongest, this is logically the worst represented in 'First Principles.' I have already explained what is the

position of the pure agnostic; and the foregoing analysis will suffice to show how little share it has in Spencer's attempted reconciliation of science and religion. What it does most effectually is to disguise the really pantheistic character of the compromise both from the philosopher himself and from his public—more especially from the feminine part, which was considerable, of that public. Not until ten years or more after the appearance of 'First Principles' did genuine agnosticism become a prominent element in English rationalism. Spencer's high authority as an evolutionist gave increased momentum to the current when it was once started; but his incoherent and vacillating treatment also served to confuse the logical issues of the whole controversy, and to embarrass the position of more consistent thinkers.

At the period with which we are now occupied ultimate theological questions had hardly come up for discussion; or rather the revolution of opinion within the Church had led to their provisional postponement. In the fifties natural theology, with as much metaphysics as its study involved, had been very much to the front. Such was the dread of Biblical criticism nourished by the then dominant Evangelical party that the existence of God seemed a safer subject of discussion than Scriptural infallibility. In eight volumes of essays published by distinguished members of the two great English Universities there occurs only one very cautious reference to the points raised by Gospel criticism,[1] while Baden Powell was permitted to indulge in some very plain speaking about the accepted arguments for theism.[2] William Smith's 'Thorndale,' and Mansel's Bampton Lectures, widely contrasted in all other respects, and proceeding from opposite theological camps, exhibit the same curious combination of timidity and daring. Those who tried to break down the taboo were charged with atheism; and the abstract question whether miracles are possible was invariably raised to block a scientific examination of the sacred documents.

By a united and powerful effort the Essayists put an end

[1] It occurs, characteristically enough, in H. B. Wilson's 'Schemes of Christian Comprehension' ('Oxford Essays,' 1857, pp. 117–8).

[2] 'The Study of the Evidences of Natural Theology' (*Op. cit.*, p. 184).

to this unworthy strategy; and the path of future enquiry was still further cleared by the unanswerable criticism of Colenso. Theologians might sneer at his arithmetical puzzles, or belittle a scholarship far exceeding their own; but they could hardly pretend that appeals to the divine omnipotence were particularly relevant to the authorship or authenticity of the Hexateuch. And simultaneously with this new phase of religious interest, metaphysical interests were becoming daily more discredited. The final submergence of Coleridge and his school; Buckle's literary success; the increasing authority of Comte and Mill; the revival of Benthamism; the bankruptcy of Hamilton's pseudo-Kantian philosophy—all told as solvent forces on the vague spiritualism behind which traditional orthodoxy had taken refuge. On the positive side, Grove, Darwin, Huxley, and Lyell were giving a speculative and romantic interest to physical science equally fatal to the prestige of unverifiable but not unfalsifiable guesses. A noble spirit of humanity too was abroad, chiefly animating those who fought on the liberal, progressive side, profiting by the world-wide victories of the liberal party, with Mill for its prophet, with Mill's 'Utilitarianism' for its gospel, with the foremost of England's young statesmen for Mill's ardent disciples.

So much by way of preface to what has to be said about the next attempted compromise between reason and religion. This was the book called 'Ecce Homo,' the most famous and brilliant work of a brilliant writer, Professor, or to give him the title he received late in life, Sir John Seeley, one conspicuous among the band of scholars and thinkers who in the second half of the last century raised Cambridge from a mere home of learning into a focus of ideas and an illuminator of English opinion.

'Ecce Homo,' described on its title-page as 'a Survey of the Life and Work of Jesus Christ,' appeared anonymously in 1865, and, although its authorship soon became an open secret, was never publicly acknowledged during Seeley's lifetime. It is easier to understand why secrecy should have been at first observed than why it was so long maintained. After all that had been won by the Broad Church clergy for the laity even more than for themselves, religious freedom still remained very limited in England forty years ago, nor is it even now complete.

A historian might hold whatever views he liked in private; but the reputation of having written a dangerous book might still be expected to interfere with his chances of academic promotion. As it happened, 'Ecce Homo,' so far from having this effect, is said to have had the contrary effect. At any rate, it is certain that Professor Seeley owed the chair of Modern History at Cambridge to Gladstone, who read his book, was delighted with it, and accepted its general tendency as highly favourable to dogmatic orthodoxy. But this was hardly the general opinion. Lord Shaftesbury, a rigid Evangelical of the old school, described 'Ecce Homo' as having been 'vomited from the jaws of hell.' To read it gave Pusey the same sort of pain that he received from Renan's 'Vie de Jésus.'[1] Still more significant was the belief widely spread among young ladies thirty years ago that it was written by Strauss. English girls could hardly have evolved this grotesque idea from their own moral consciousness, and it is reasonable to conclude that they derived it from informants who readily identified the anonymous author of 'Ecce Homo' with the one anti-Christian writer whose name was most familiar to them.

Even in England there are extremists to whom a compromise is more hateful than the opposite extreme. Fitzjames Stephen, who afterwards became the most thorough rationalist of the age, attacked 'Ecce Homo,' less violently indeed than Lord Shaftesbury, but with more incisive sarcasm, calling its author 'a sheep in wolf's clothing,'[2] and preferring Paley's 'Evidences' to 'a whole cartload' of such books.[3] The more ordinary phrase, if less epigrammatic, would in this instance have been rather more appropriate. Like most modern rationalists, including Stephen himself, Seeley had been brought up in an Evangelical family, and, while discarding all pietism, retained through life a deep religious feeling, and a strong attachment to what he considered essential Christianity as its absolute form. On the other hand, moral interests were with him supreme, and the chief, if not the sole, value of Christianity lay in its furtherance of these. But for that purpose its value is inestimable, and the object of 'Ecce Homo' is to bring out this view in full relief.

[1] Morley's 'Life of Gladstone,' Vol. II., p. 167.
[2] 'Life of Sir J. F. Stephen,' p. 200.
[3] 'Horae Sabbaticae,' Third Series, p. 92.

To make man moral and to keep him so two agencies are indispensable. Conscience has first to be awakened by a winning, commanding personality; it has then to be kept in operation by the presence and pressure of public opinion, by life in a society organised with a view to the promotion of pure, just, and beneficent conduct. Now, of all known personalities, the most winning and commanding was Christ's; of all societies for the promotion of goodness the most efficacious had been his Church. His work was to redeem mankind from selfishness and suspicion by kindling an enthusiasm for humanity hitherto unknown. He kindled it by the combined force of precept and example, by showing that the very noblest representative of the race could find even in the most degraded some image and likeness of himself. The society he founded resembled and surpassed the Roman empire in its world-embracing character; but, unlike that empire, instead of destroying the virtues fostered by the old tribal communities based on ties of consanguinity, it gave them a wider extension and a more enduring sanction, while abolishing the mutual hostility which had been their curse. As an ethical teacher, Christ doubled the area of morality by adding the duty of positive beneficence to the duty of abstinence from injury. At the same time he gave it a depth before unknown by substituting the obligation of right feeling for the obligation of outward performance.

There is nothing in all this that a Unitarian might not accept, or, giving him the genius, might not have written. Indeed, it early became, and has since continued to be, a commonplace of culture to observe, when 'Ecce Homo' was mentioned in conversation, that the author occupies himself exclusively with the human aspect of Christ's mission. The narrowest orthodoxy will of course allow that there was such an aspect, that Christ was perfect man no less than perfect God, will even on occasion, and as a matter of historical interest, draw attention to the fatal error committed by Gnosticism in denying it. But there are no Gnostics nowadays; Catholic faith is threatened exclusively from the opposite quarter; and, as it happened, the recent appearance of Renan's 'Vie de Jésus,' by emphasising with far more picturesqueness the same side of their common subject, threw a sinister light on the suspected drift of its English rival.

If there are times when the half is better than the whole, there are others when it is worse than nothing; and to critics like Lord Shaftesbury or Dr. Pusey the publication of 'Ecce Homo' must have seemed to fall in one of these. The very dogmas round which controversy was raging, and in whose defence Puseyites had joined hands with Recordites—Biblical infallibility, inherited sin, redemption from its consequences through the vicarious sufferings of Christ, Christ's divinity as the necessary condition for his atoning efficacy, and eternal torment as the penalty attendant on its non-acceptance—these were passed over by the new interpreter of the Gospel with a silence which was equivalent to their rejection. And this silence seemed underlined by the author's bold assertion that since the title of Christian was not forfeited by imperfect morals, still less need it be forfeited by imperfect belief, by doctrinal unsoundness.[1] Coleridge, with all his breadth, had refused the name of Christian to such great and good men as Milton, Newton, and Locke; Seeley would apparently have allowed it to Rathbone Greg. Such charity might seem to argue a personal need.

So complete indeed is the absence of theology in 'Ecce Homo' that even a liberal Unitarian might have scrupled to recommend it as a manual of religious edification. Apart from some rather perfunctory acknowledgments, easy to interpret in a figurative sense, one gets an impression that the work of reforming society might be carried on without reference to the existence of a God. And doubtless what shocked Lord Shaftesbury so terribly was just this divorce of the higher philanthropy from the pietism with which in his own life it had been habitually associated.

Seeley's original intention had been to follow up 'Ecce Homo' by another volume, having for its subject Christ as the creator of modern theology and religion.[2] That volume never appeared, nor is any outline of it known to have been prepared. But some hints dropped at the conclusion of 'Ecce Homo' show that, according to the author, Christ's principal work in this direction was to dispel the terrors with which death had hitherto been associated. How 'he reconciled men to nature as well as

[1] 'Ecce Homo,' p. 91 (Eversley ed.). [2] *Op. cit.*, p. xxvi.

to each other by offering them new views of the Power by which the world is governed, by his own triumph over death, and by his revelation of eternity'—was to have been the subject of that intended sequel.[1]

If we may take the mental progress of any one man as a sign of how the most highly trained academic opinion was drifting, it seemed more ominous for the traditional religion that such a promise should have been made and left unfulfilled than that Christ's relation to theology should have been altogether ignored. Seeley did indeed subsequently bring out a volume called 'Natural Religion,' whose contents will fall to be described in a later chapter. For the present I need only say that so far from reassuring those whom his first essay had alarmed, it was of a character to confirm their worst suspicions. A good working religion can, it seems, dispense with a personal God as well as with a future life. When pressed with regard to the latter, Seeley did indeed declare that we should believe in it, but added that we should think of it as little as possible. Whatever may be the value of this extremely curt confession of faith, one thing at any rate seems certain. It does not represent the attitude of Jesus or of his immediate disciples. Tolstoi may be right or he may be wrong in holding that the Founder of Christianity expressly denied a future life. But if he believed in it, he certainly thought, and wished others to think, a great deal about it. Seeley's ingenuity was marvellous, and might conceivably have got over the difficulty; but we may infer from his not facing it that it was too much for his historical sincerity.

In 'Ecce Homo' the Gospel miracles are generally referred to as supernatural events whose authenticity there is no good reason for rejecting. A critic who took this point of view could hardly fail to accept the Resurrection as historically and literally true. On the other hand, the whole tone of 'Natural Religion' seems to exclude the possibility that its author still clung to his early belief in the miraculous. And with the surrender of miracles that particular evidence for a future life would have to be abandoned. Such in brief seems to have been the process through which Seeley passed; and in default of more certain information, this may be accepted as the reason why his promised undertaking was abandoned.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 362.

Read in the light of its actual sequel, which, as we now see, was a more logical sequel than the promised theological treatise that it replaced, 'Ecce Homo' comes out in its true character as an attempted reconciliation between positivism and Christianity; that is to say, for the historian of rationalism, as a temporary compromise between the two.

Positivism must here be understood not in the more general sense associated with it by modern usage, but in the strict sense of Auguste Comte's philosophy and religion. Whether Seeley had ever studied these at first hand does not appear; in all cases contemporary literature must have given him an acquaintance with them sufficient for his purpose. The remarkable thing is that while the earlier English students had begun, like Comte himself, with the scientific side of positivism, and had either neglected its social applications, or had summarily rejected them as chimerical, it was just those applications which, directly or indirectly, seem to have inspired what was most striking in 'Ecce Homo'; while the scientific view of nature as a substitute for the old theology first appears in 'Natural Religion.' An explanation of this rather anomalous course may be found in the circumstance that Seeley's entrance on manhood and active life fell at a time when special attention was being drawn to the religious side of Comte's teaching by his death, by the foundation of a positivist community in London, by the translation of his 'Catechism,' and by the notices of it published in various English reviews. Some fifteen years before, Comte's influence, on its first introduction into English thought, gave a sudden shock to one of the Oxford High Churchmen, quickening his movement towards Rome as the great historic representative of Christendom. And it would not be surprising if a young Cambridge man of Evangelical training and liberal sympathies should, under the same impulsion, be led to construct *his* 'Ideal of a Christian Church' under forms very different from Ward's, and approaching much more nearly to the secularist type, but still, nominally at least, within the limits of Christianity and in avowed adherence to its Author.

The scheme looked well on paper; and it had the advantage over Comte's of involving a far less violent breach of continuity with existing traditions. At the same time, having been

moulded under Protestant influences, it did not give the shock to reason involved in the association of Catholic imagery and ritual with the negation of God and of personal immortality. The logical weakness of 'Ecce Homo' lies elsewhere, in its unpardonable distortion of history, for which the imperfect knowledge of its age is partly, though not entirely, responsible. If the legendary words attributed to Pilate were really uttered, they could not have been associated with much more misleading ideas in his own mind or the mind of his audience than those left with the readers of the volume to which they have given so telling a title. An almost wholly uncritical acceptance of documentary material, an arbitrary selection of data, a still more arbitrary interpretation of the passages selected, an omission of what, if included, would alter the whole point of view—these are the most obvious features of Seeley's method, and attention was duly called to them by contemporary critics.[1] Whatever other virtues may be favoured by this revised version of the Gospel, veracity cannot profit by an attempt to read the religion of humanity into the dreams of millenarian Communism.

Our modern ethical standards have their real root in the literature and philosophy of Greece. Yet the author, though himself an accomplished Hellenist, uses these chiefly as a foil to imaginary Christian perfections, actually degrading them even below the level of old Hebrew teaching. He does not indeed attempt to conceal the place given to the idea of humanity by Stoicism; but he seriously represents it as an offence given to the nationalist conscience of Roman civilisation, needing to be made acceptable by an authoritative edict from Palestine.[2]

Apart from such exaggerations, Seeley is of course perfectly within his rights when he urges that the question how far the Christian ideal was anticipated by Greek philosophy is of secondary importance. Since Aristotle, and even earlier than Aristotle, moralists have known that to tell men what to do is one thing, to prevail on them to do it another, and an

[1] See especially a powerful article in the 'Westminster Review,' for 1866, by Henry Sidgwick (reprinted in his 'Miscellaneous Essays and Addresses,' 1904).

[2] 'Ecce Homo,' p. 151

incomparably harder thing. Whether Christianity has actually exercised this persuasive power is a purely historical question, quite distinct from the question of its truth and origin. Those who take the affirmative side have to show, first that there has been a real improvement in conduct, and secondly that it has arisen from the cause assigned. But if we grant their contention, another question of at least equal importance arises: by what means was the reformation effected? To this question there are at least three possible answers. A convinced and earnest believer would probably ascribe the change of heart to supernatural grace, bestowed on those who accepted the message of salvation. A semi-rationalistic divine, unwilling to call in miracles where natural causes are sufficient, would explain the success of Christianity by what are called its sanctions, in plain words, by the hope of Heaven and the fear of hell. All through the eighteenth century theologians as a rule took no other ground; and some freethinkers shared their opinion to the extent of allowing, like Collins, that the belief in such sanctions was a useful check on the ignorant masses; or to the extent of claiming, like Voltaire, that it would be associated no less efficaciously with the simpler and more rational creed of deism. The third theory, with which we are principally concerned, is that the moralising power of Christianity was of purely human origin, that it was a force of sympathy and opinion, an appeal to men's higher nature exercised by the Church as an ever-present social agency, or by the life of its Founder as an ever-living example, or by both combined.

As all know by the famous treatise bearing that title, the imitation of Christ has long been used for this purpose within the limits of supernatural religion. In some ways it cannot be used with full effect unless the doctrine of Christ's incarnation and atonement are admitted; for then the full amount of what he underwent for mankind, and consequently the gratitude of the Christian believer, become immeasurably enhanced. On the other hand, the moralising action of the Church, if it really depended not on an appeal to supernatural sanctions, or on the administration of divinely instituted sacraments as means of supernatural grace, but on a skilful organisation of human sympathies, a judicious employment of social pressure by an

independent spiritual power, itself the product of unaided historical evolution, has nothing specifically Christian about it, nothing unique, nothing that cannot be successfully imitated by a new spiritual power, based not on revelation but on social science.

That this last is the true explanation of what the Church did for the world, and that such beneficent action might be exercised apart from the Christian mythology, is one of Auguste Comte's great original ideas. True or false, it has, at any rate, the eminently French qualities of logical thoroughness, of unembarrassed lucidity and frankness.

Now, Comte's idea of a Church had by some channel or another surely reached Seeley's mind, where, mingling with older religious traditions, it became the motive of his own brilliant work. In some ways that mind was more French than English; as a chemist might say, it was of the crystalloid rather than of the colloid type. In his style we find the same combination of ingenuity with artistic feeling which gives French literature its character and charm; the untranslatable word *éclat* best expresses its power to startle as well as to sparkle, to excite both pleasure and surprise. But the fundamental French quality of steady good sense is wanting; the English passion for compromise served by the English talent for special pleading blinds the author to the impossibility of his dazzling dialectical combinations.

Comte's reinterpretation of Catholicism, his adoption of it into a new order of ideas, was also, as I have shown elsewhere, a compromise, in his instance between romanticism and modern science; but it was one of those compromises made on the model of nature herself, who habitually adapts old structures to new modes of vital activity; here, at least, positivism breathes the very spirit of historical evolution. Seeley, on the other hand, repeats the error of Mill and Lewes by compromising on a compromise; with the result of hatching a whole brood of inconsistencies which even his dazzling ingenuity and plausible rhetoric cannot induce to live together in amity. Even an orthodox believer is hard set to reconcile the Johannine with the Synoptic picture of Jesus; still he finds a way out of the difficulty by taking one as a representation of what was more divine, the other as a representation of what was more human

in the Incarnate Son of God. Seeley, while professedly disclaiming the Fourth Gospel as an authority, uses traits borrowed from it without scruple whenever they can be made to contribute to his identification of the Church, that is to say the Church of England, with a purely humanist ethical society. Thus the divine Christ of St. John reappears as a creative moral genius; while the Synoptic Jesus, who lived and moved in the expectation of a divine kingdom not his own but the Father's, with a view to whose transformation-scenes all social values were to be reversed, figures as the infallible legislator of a distant earthly community where no such visions are to be entertained. But supernaturalism, relegated into a shadowy background, still has its revenge. Miracles more astounding than the Virgin-birth or the Resurrection are implied by the theory of 'Ecce Homo.' Catholic theology shows a certain respect for historical continuity by interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures, however falsely, as a preparation for the Redeemer's advent. Modern philosophy reveals another sort of preparation in the social and intellectual evolution of all antiquity. But nothing could be more incredible than the sudden appearance of such a reformer as the hero of 'Ecce Homo' in such an environment as it describes — except one thing, which is that his legislation should be meekly accepted by a world so unprepared to appreciate it. To deduce the Sermon on the Mount and the diatribes against the rulers of Jerusalem clause by clause from the 'Enthusiasm of Humanity' was a logical effort comparable to Newman's 'Development of Christian Doctrine.' But to imply that their author foresaw the continuous growth of civilisation, and was providing eighteen hundred years beforehand for its spiritual necessities, is but a survival of the same pulpit-methods that had formerly interpreted the Pope as Anti-Christ or Napoleon as the Man of Sin.

These are some of the irrationalities that gape beneath the smooth and glittering surface of 'Ecce Homo.' To point them out at this time of day may seem a barren and belated office. No one of Seeley's ability and learning would now compose a work where such assumptions were associated with such omissions. But if in the evolution of reason history is often the best criticism of illusion, there are occasions also when criticism

becomes an integral element of history. That so clear-headed a scholar should fall into such confusions, anachronisms, and positive perversions of truth, helps to elucidate the circumstances of his country and his age. Freedom of thought and speech won back for the laity by the clergy and the ecclesiastical lawyers, at first retained the marks of its derivation in a clerical reticence and a certain legal sophistry. Moreover, this freedom, imperfect enough in reality, was taken at less than its real value, and, falling into inexperienced hands, was awkwardly used. Nor was the restraining action of authority merely external. Even the most vigorous intellects still remained hampered by their pietistic training and early associations, which sometimes struck the deepest roots in the most thoughtful minds. To harmonise this bias with the new criticism seemed a fascinating problem to the practical reason, for speculative reason stands aloof from such works of conciliation and mutual adjustment. And no environment could be more favourable to such a composition of forces. Compromise is the very soul of English politics; mutual consideration and forbearance the very soul of English social intercourse. Hence the tendency that issued in Herbert Spencer's combination of Hume's agnosticism with the old theism in the spurious pantheism of his Unknowable Power, and in Seeley's Christian Enthusiasm of Humanity, which is a blend of Newman's churchmanship with the pure humanism and naturalism of Comte and Renan. With about equal want of logic, the Cambridge scholar had much more literary skill than the author of 'First Principles,' and, addressing himself to a more popular audience on a more popular subject, had at first an enormously greater success. But the progress of positive knowledge soon betrayed the weakness of his position; and the implied admissions of his next religious treatise left his interpretation of Christianity, so to speak, in the air. The failure of both compromises may serve as a warning example to those who put their trust in the analogous but much duller attempts of the present day. They tell only as concessions of faith to reason; as concessions of reason to faith they offer themselves with forged credentials and are speedily disowned.

Another work of the same general tendency, but embodying more advanced views, appeared simultaneously with 'Ecce

Homo.' This was Lecky's well-known 'History of European Rationalism'—or, to use the more modest and cautious title chosen by its author, 'A History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe.' In reality the book is not a history, but a miscellaneous collection of historical essays held together by a common reference to such theological superstitions as were then supposed to be generally abandoned by the educated classes, or at least to be in process of irremediable decay. A good deal of rather needless iteration, joined to a good deal of rather irrelevant detail, expanded these essays to the bulk of two considerable volumes, whose contents it is needless to describe at length. What this writer had to say about rationalism is less instructive in itself than as indicating an attitude towards reason and religious belief which, to judge by his wide popularity, was shared by many both then and afterwards.

George Eliot very wittily, if rather unkindly, described Lecky as one who, while not denying that in certain circumstances and with certain limitations all the radii of a circle are equal to one another, adds that the spirit of geometry must not be pushed too far; and again as one who does not know how far he goes, but knows that he does not go too far. The position so characterised is very appropriate to one who takes his opinions on authority, but on the authority of a tradition which is not immutable. Grant that there are certain tendencies of opinion always pointing in one direction, still, for aught we know, they may stop or be reversed at any moment. Distinctly, then, the safe course is to await rather than to anticipate developments. To swim in the centre of the current is the best way to avoid sudden shocks and rude recalls. But to define the centre of the current would involve just that exercise of private judgment which was found too great an effort for unaided individual reason.

Lecky ostentatiously classed himself among the conies. What was more, he thought that the wisest of mankind were conies also, more weatherwise than the rest of the warren, but quite incapable of striking out an independent line. What passed for originality and daring really meant no more than a keener perception of how the wind was blowing. 'The way in which our leading thinkers, consciously or unconsciously, form

their opinions is by endeavouring to ascertain what are the laws that govern the successive modifications of belief; in what direction, towards what conceptions, the intellect of man advances with the advance of civilisation; what are the leading characteristics that mark the belief of civilised ages and nations as compared with barbarous ones, and of the most educated as compared with the most illiterate classes.'[1]

Unfortunately there is not that complete agreement even among the most educated which would be desirable for our safe guidance. Accordingly 'the lover of conscientious (*sic*) enquiry pursues an eclectic course when party and sectarian passions rage fiercely around him.'[2] And in the last resort our appeal must be to that somewhat vague authority, 'the successive developments and tendencies manifested by the collective wisdom of mankind.'[3]

These words strikingly recall the Augustinian dictum quoted a year before by Newman in his 'Apologia,' *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*, as a guarantee for accepting doctrines utterly opposed to Lecky's. Catholicism can at least point to a depository of 'collective wisdom' composed of men selected, trained, and organised for the office of distinguishing the 'developments and tendencies' which are right from those which are wrong. In the secularist parliament of man devolution is also a method habitually chosen for the safer or more rapid expedition of business. But the committees are self-appointed, and sometimes come to blows both among their members and with one another. Lecky himself has pointed out that such typical freethinkers as Hobbes, Bolingbroke, Hume, and Gibbon were opposed to popular liberty. Others of a later date might be named who have opposed useful reforms eventually carried by the popular vote. Are we to take our politics from the masses and our religion from the classes?

In truth no shift can exonerate us from the exercise of our reason. And the choice between rival authorities may involve us in a more difficult and dangerous exercise of it than the choice between rival opinions.

Lecky habitually talks as if the trend of history were all in one way, the way of progressive civilisation. And he habitually

[1] 'History of Rationalism,' Introduction, pp. xvii.–xviii.
[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 331. [3] P. 199.

refers to civilisation as if it were a purely impersonal, spontaneous process. Even as applied to the formation of geological strata, his language would be misleading; much more then when it relates to the thoughts and feelings of human beings. Coming from a professed believer in freewill, it seems particularly strange. His one original idea is that certain theological dogmas are abandoned, not because they are proved to be irrational, but because, to use a telling expression of his own, intellectual and moral changes have produced a climate in which they cannot live. Those changes again are produced by civilisation, and civilisation apparently by nothing. Physical science creates a general impression that there are no isolated interferences with the course of nature; a belief in miracles is incompatible with that impression, and therefore the belief ceases to be entertained. Religious persecution follows on the belief in endless future torments; but that belief is incompatible with modern philanthropy and modern theories of penal discipline, accordingly it has disappeared or become inoperative, carrying the practice of persecution along with it.

Such considerations went, no doubt, for a good deal with Lecky himself and with many of his contemporaries. But he seems to ignore the extent to which most people's minds are built in watertight compartments, which it is an office, and an important office, of rationalism to break through. And apart from this, the theory seems to impose unaccountable limitations on reason. Scientific discoveries can neither be made nor communicated without a strenuous exercise of logical thought; and it is hard to understand why the same process cannot be brought to bear directly on religious beliefs; or rather, as he does not deny the occasional use of reason in that direction, why we need assume that this so seldom happens. Most of us find religion the most interesting of all subjects; while the absence of sensible evidence is apt to excite curiosity and scepticism as to the validity of its claims. Moreover, the current distinction between true and false religions positively invites the exercise of argument on the nature of their pretensions. We know by the victories of science what reason can do in the way of beating down ordinary prejudice. Why should it be denied that same power when confronted with a false theology?

Again, even admitting that science full-grown and dominant has the effect of causing certain dogmas to be dismissed without a hearing, we have to enquire how the case stands with an infant science struggling for existence. Notoriously it finds in religious belief a formidable opponent, and the question arises how that opposition is overcome. At the very time when Lecky was writing, the most important scientific theory of the century had the utmost difficulty in gaining a hearing amid the clamours raised by religious zealots on its first appearance under the form given to it by Darwin, having been successfully put down under its earlier form in the forties. I have endeavoured to show in another chapter that this opposition to scientific truth was overcome less by the natural growth of science itself than by the rationalistic criticism which liberal theologians brought to bear on the assumptions of the reactionary party.

In order that the trend of public opinion may exercise the papal authority claimed for it by our historian, not only must the utterances of its self-elected pontiffs at any given moment be reconciled with one another, but it must also be shown to have followed a uniform direction through all the past. And, in fact, one great object of Lecky's book was to prove that there had been such a constant stream of tendency making for his own personal preferences in the way of religious belief. His remarkable intellectual honesty hampered him considerably in the execution of this design, and would have hampered him still more had it not been relieved by a still more remarkable ignorance. In some departments of literature his reading was certainly immense, and procured him a reputation for learning which had a good deal to do with the vogue of his earlier writings. But a very desultory education had left him not only with grave deficiencies in some most important branches of knowledge, but even without the training which would have made him aware of those deficiencies, and aware of the necessity for making them good before embarking on his great enterprise. Among these neglected studies were classical antiquity, Biblical criticism, physical science and its history, German literature, German philosophy, and indeed philosophy in general except what could be learned out of French handbooks. French literature indeed seems to have been the subject he was most familiar with, and the superficial eclecticism which dominated it

during his youth was largely responsible for the limitations of his intellectual outlook.

It may be, however, that no amount of culture would have saved Lecky from falling into such extraordinary misinterpretations of history as that religious intolerance proceeds from the belief in original sin, or that this belief is destroyed by 'the triumph of democratic principles in the sphere of politics.'[1] For the fundamental mediocrity of his intelligence, combined with a certain superficial and facile ingenuity in the combination of disparate ideas, naturally fitted him for the position of a mediator between the extremes of opinion—a position than which nothing is more favourable to the unconscious distortion of realities; for whereas 'the falsehood of extremes' only twists them in one direction, the falsehood of compromise twists them in two directions. In this instance the nature of the compromise was to combine half the methods of faith with half the results of rationalism.

Lecky, as we have seen, dismissed certain theological dogmas —miracles, original sin, and hell—on the summary ground that they have been irreversibly condemned by the progressive intelligence and conscience of civilised mankind. That he was able to make out a case at all for this procedure, proves the radical impotence of authority as a method of religious belief, and supplies one more illustration of that dialectic dissolution which was shown in the first chapter of this work to be its inevitable fate. Every one can place the seat of authority where his experience proves that it has been exercised, and in Lecky's case it was exercised on the side of unbelief. Nor was this the only reactionary weapon he was able to turn against the theologians. The conflict of authorities necessitates an appeal to some higher jurisdiction. When reason has been put out of court the appeal is ultimately carried to practical consequences. It is claimed for religious beliefs that they make for the good and happiness of mankind, even apart from their prospective results in another life. But this, which I have called the method of ophelism, leads, like traditionalism, to conflicting interpretations. Lecky shows that rationalism has contributed largely to human happiness and virtue by putting an end to witch-burning and to religious persecution. In this way much suffering has been prevented. Kindly feeling has been allowed

[1] 'History of Rationalism,' Vol. I., p. 392.

to grow, and the love of truth has been encouraged by the removal of penalties on free enquiry. At the same time the decay of theological interests has revived the ancient value of patriotism, and contributed to the rise of democracy, thus causing increased attention to be paid to the wants of the poorer classes; while science, by creating new facilities for mutual communication, has diminished the feeling of international hostility. Finally, the growth of industry, accompanied as it has been by a better understanding of economic truth, has acted in a rationalistic sense by undermining theological dogma, with results on the whole favourable to morality. Here, however, the balance of loss and gain is less distinctly on the side of rationalism than elsewhere, and the work closes with a rather gloomy forecast of the results to be apprehended from the spread of selfishness and materialism in modern society.

Like 'Ecce Homo,' Lecky's 'History of Rationalism' has very much in common with the modern Unitarian standpoint. Implicitly there is a more complete negation of the supernatural than Seeley would have sanctioned, at least in his earlier period, but not more than that to which James Martineau ultimately advanced. Nothing inconsistent with the dictates of reason and conscience is to be believed; the test being evidently so applied as to exclude every distinctive doctrine of Catholic Christianity; although the name of Christian is preserved as an attractive title for a mild social philosophy, among whose characteristics love of truth figures, oddly enough, as a specifically Christian virtue. In this respect there is a certain affinity with Rousseau, whose intolerance, however, places him at a disadvantage in the author's eyes as compared with Voltaire, who is emphatically declared to have 'done more to destroy the greatest of human curses than any other of the sons of men.' [1]

To Lecky also, with all his deficiencies, we must assign a distinguished place in the history of that liberating process where Voltaire's is the greatest name. In this connexion he ranks as the worthy successor of Buckle and Mill. His dependence on the former is indeed evident and notorious. His style is an almost ludicrously close copy of Buckle's in so far as that could be copied without the genius or the passion with which it is on fire. There is the same return to the natural religion

[1] 'History of Rationalism,' Vol. II., p. 73.

of the eighteenth century, the same interest in political economy, the same complete break with romanticism, the same horror of intolerance and persecution. But Lecky took warning from what had been found offensive in the attitude of his predecessor towards received opinions, and, generally speaking, avoided the tone of aggressive paradox and self-assertion to which he certainly had not the same temptation of conscious superiority over the rest of mankind. The historian of civilisation had been censured for supporting determinism by statistics. The historian of rationalism goes out of his way at the first start to let it be known that he believes in freewill, although his freewill seems to be something indistinguishable from moral purpose, and quite compatible with the uniformity of human actions. The one had eliminated moral causes as a factor in progress. The other credits them with a large share in the growth of enlightened opinion. Both seem to have disbelieved to an equal extent in any supernatural revelation. But while the one contrived to give an impression of hostility to Christianity, the other misses no opportunity of complimenting it.

As a consequence of this conciliatory attitude, Lecky succeeded in winning—one cannot say a wider popularity, for he was less read—but at any rate a more caressing celebrity than his great model.

He became a drawing-room Buckle, a domesticated positivist. If he did little to strengthen the attack on reactionary theologies, he did much to disarm and enfeeble their defenders. Every copy of his work that was sold probably won several new adherents to the idea that men, and even women, have as good a right to their own opinions in religion as in politics, besides disseminating the rather startling information that this idea is of purely rationalistic origin, superstitious and sanguinary persecutions having been only a little less rife in Protestant than in Roman Catholic communities.

It was indeed a strange anomaly that a belief in natural law should be recommended as the will of the majority; and that reason should be requested to hold her tongue while authority and utility pleaded her cause. But the important thing was that Bayle and Middleton, Voltaire and Hume, should be listened to once more on any plea, however far-fetched; and that a hearing should be secured beforehand for what Huxley

and Clifford, Mr. John Morley and the two Stephens, had to say ten years later on the same side.

Meanwhile a considerable period elapsed before any fresh contribution of importance was made to the literature of rationalism in England. Colenso continued to publish fresh parts of his Examination without adding anything of permanent value to the positions he had already made good. The Essayists, although formally acquitted of heresy, made no use of their newly won liberty, being apparently afraid of exciting any further scandal. Apart from the general fatigue and languor which may be supposed to have followed on the uninterrupted and strenuous warfare of the preceding twenty years, two causes may be assigned for this sudden cessation of activity. There was, first of all, the diversion given to innovating energy by the resumption of the agitation for reform consequent on Palmerston's death in the autumn of 1865. We have seen reason to believe that the opening of a new era in 1830 had a similarly inhibitory influence on the liberal theology of those times, and we shall see that the same cause produced the same effect in 1880, or even a little earlier.

It so happened that this transference of energy to the other side of the reforming movement in the middle sixties was accompanied, just as it had been a generation before, by a change of front and a new aggression on the part of the reactionary theologians. I refer to the sudden reappearance of the old High Church party under the name of Ritualists. After the collapse of the Oxford Movement consequent on the secession of its chief to the Roman communion, those of Newman's followers who remained faithful to his early principles became known as Puseyites, and though of little account at the University, continued to carry on an active propaganda throughout the country. Intellectually their position had never been strong, and the spread of rationalism made it perfectly hopeless. But the classes to whom popular religion addresses itself are not distinguished either for learning or logic; and the new criticism, by discrediting the Low Church party, had the incidental effect of clearing the ground for its old rival, just as fifteen years earlier the same criticism in its first beginnings by discrediting Tractarianism had brought about an Evangelical revival.

On the other hand, it might have been expected that the degradation and foreseen ruin of the Temporal Power, by stimulating the Protestant feeling in England, would have brought increased odium on Romanising tendencies within the Anglican Church. But in point of fact the Italian revolution seems to have had a precisely opposite effect. For as the struggle for Italian unity tended to dissociate the Catholic cause in general from the political interests of Pius IX., so English sympathy with the Italian people operated still more powerfully in the same direction. High Anglicans were less and less suspected of allying themselves with a cause which many orthodox Romans did not support; and the cause itself, from its political weakness, ceased to inspire any alarm. An old priest who could hardly hold his own at St. Peter's seemed little likely to nourish any schemes for again reducing a free and powerful European kingdom under his sway. At the same time the general enthusiasm for the principles of nationality and historical continuity told in favour of a Church which was both national and historic.

Yet these influences, potent as they were, counted for little more than the removal of checks, hardly as positive stimulants to a new form of religiosity. The really determining element in Ritualism was aesthetic. An aesthetic motive had in truth been operative from the very beginning of the movement with Keble's 'Christian Year'; but it needed the intervention of a more commanding genius to tell with full effect. The English people are not naturally wanting in love of beauty, although that love has often been obscured by false taste, or crushed by a perverted morality. Their cathedrals are among the glories of mediaeval architecture, their poetry is the first in modern times, their school of painting held for a century the primacy in art. This ancient inborn passion the greatest prose-writer of the age made it his study through long years to revive and direct towards the noblest themes. Beginning with a one-sided enthusiasm for landscape painting, the young critic soon extended his devotion to the Gothic architecture of the Middle Ages, and to the sacred art of the early Italian Renaissance, embodying the result of his researches in volume after volume where the microscopic observation of a Darwin was combined with more than the eloquence of a Carlyle. In this way

Ruskin gave a fresh start to the romantic movement just as it was dying out among ourselves, and had come to an end over all the rest of Western Europe—with consequences which once more extended beyond the boundaries of art and literature.

No one could be more careful than Ruskin to distinguish between truth and beauty, and to none was Puseyism more distasteful. Accustomed to found his own beliefs on pure reason, and habitually justifying his aesthetic preferences by elaborate arguments, he had no sympathy whatever with the converts who have been drawn to Rome by the decorative charm of her ritual. But much as the master himself disliked and despised picturesque superstition, his earlier literary activity could not but be favourable to the growth of religious romanticism among his followers. The influence of a great teacher is never limited by his own outlook; and just as some of Ruskin's too eager disciples built metropolitan railway stations on models suggested by the 'Stones of Venice,' so many others no doubt perceived a connexion that he would not recognise between gorgeous ecclesiastical vestments and the truth of the doctrines inculcated by their wearers.

For the purpose of the present work all that need be said about aesthetic ophelism as a method of faith has already found its place in the general introduction. Here it will suffice to mention that it came into play with overpowering fascination at this juncture, and was so accurately recognised as such by public opinion that the word 'ritualism' at once came into use as a designation of High Church practices in their new development, and has been appropriated to sacerdotal tendencies ever since. Its immediate effect was to divert attention from disputes about doctrine to disputes about what outsiders contemptuously called the cut and colour of the ecclesiastical petticoats. We shall see hereafter how the underlying current of religious belief which these grotesque exhibitions merely symbolised ultimately stimulated rationalistic criticism to a vigour never before witnessed in this country. For the present we may fitly pause to see how well the interval of apparent apathy was filled up, and how the decay of old convictions has left its mark on the laws and literature of England.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE REACTION OF RATIONALISM ON POLITICS AND LITERATURE

THE growth of toleration is not always due to the decay of religious belief. It may arise from the equilibration of warring sects and parties, from the discovery that their strength being nearly balanced, no one creed can hope for a permanent victory over the rest, so that a way of living peacefully together may advantageously be substituted for an endless internecine conflict. But when the strong are found voluntarily surrendering a privileged position, or suddenly withdrawing from it after a long and successful resistance, it seems likely that they have ceased to care so very much about the object of contention, or that their attention has been diverted by a more alarming attack from another quarter. And if the attack be such as to threaten both parties equally, there is an evident inducement to sink minor differences, and to combine their forces against the new assailant. In this way very much of the toleration granted to one another by the various communities among which Christendom is divided, and by the sections into which each Church tends to split up, may be traced to the influence of those who stand outside Christianity altogether.

By a somewhat singular exception to the usual customs of war, this spirit of growing concord and mutual forbearance, so far from being dreaded by the common enemy against whom their ranks are closed, is eagerly welcomed and fostered wherever that enemy carries the flag of reason. Alike as a matter of principle and as a matter of self-interest, rationalists desire that all differences about religion should be adjusted by argument instead of by threats or bribes. On the score of superior enlightenment, or of picturesqueness, or of general culture, their sympathies may be more or less ardently engaged

on the side of the favoured Church against its unprivileged rivals. But none the less do they labour for the removal of all privileges that have been artificially created and maintained. No injury that can be done to reason by a temporary coalition of its opponents would counterbalance the advantage gained by referring all disputes to its arbitration.

I am perfectly aware that the principle here laid down is not universally acted on, or even theoretically admitted by every one who calls himself a rationalist. Like the economic man, the *homo rationalis* is an abstraction. In the complications of actual life it is not always possible to say where persuasion ends and force begins, or what amount of probable danger justifies us in disarming an unscrupulous opponent. These, as we have seen, are points which the great theorist of liberty neglected to take into account. But English rationalists at any rate, whatever may be their sympathy with the revolutionary legislation of Continental States, are as a rule in favour of religious equality at home; and the series of great measures directed against the privileged position of the Church of England at the beginning of the last third of the nineteenth century received their nearly undivided support; while these measures again testify to a sudden growth of religious liberalism in the country, such as only the spread of rationalistic opinions can explain. When the fundamental tenets of dogmatic Christianity were challenged with impunity even, as was thought, among the clergy themselves, sectarian differences counted for less than before, and less reluctance was felt to sink their expression in face of the common enemy.

The measures to which I have referred are four in number; the abolition of Church Rates; the disestablishment and disendowment of the Protestant Establishment in Ireland; the Education Act of 1870; and the abolition of University Tests. I am not aware that their success has ever been ascribed to the rationalistic movement of the previous twenty years; indeed it may be said with perfect truth that they were supported by many earnest religious believers, and that their chief author was a renowned champion of the narrowest traditional orthodoxy. And if it is asked why they passed at that particular period of England's intellectual history, the conventional answer will probably be that liberal ideas are always making way, that a wide extension

of the suffrage had recently been granted, and that the generous instincts of the people were readily enlisted on behalf of justice and toleration.

Against this facile but rather vague explanation we have to set the too often forgotten fact that liberal ideas are not, any more than other ideas, provided by nature with hands and feet; they need to be borne forward on the shoulders of a multitude, which must not only accept the burden but must postpone to its safe delivery every other interest for years at a stretch. We have therefore to ascertain in each particular instance how the requisite amount of enthusiasm was obtained, and how the standing obstacles to progress were removed.

We have also to bear in mind as regards the mass of the English people that since Queen Anne's time they have not been particularly remarkable for religious tolerance, even towards Protestant Dissenters, and much less towards Roman Catholics. Catholic emancipation was carried under an oligarchic government by a coalition of enlightened statesmen, as would seem against popular opinion; and it is questionable whether the bill would have been accepted by a reformed House of Commons. In a former chapter I have dwelt on the history of the celebrated Appropriation Clause as a proof that the efforts of Whig statesmen for the secularisation of Church property received no real support from the electorate; while the endowment of Maynooth College was the work of statesmen acting on their own convictions regardless of popular clamour. In 1852 Lord Aberdeen observed that there was 'more intense bigotry in England than in any other country in Europe.'[1] This state of feeling would not be diminished by the ascendency of the Evangelical party all through the fifties, nor by the military events of the decade, which the religious writers of that period sedulously employed to rekindle the dying fires of pietistic fanaticism among the more ignorant classes. While engaged on the composition of his 'Essay on Liberty' Mill noticed some ominous symptoms going to prove that intolerance was on the increase, and that the complete revival of the still unrepealed laws against the expression of opinions adverse to Christianity was not impossible. As instances of this tendency he refers to a very discreditable prosecution for blasphemy in the summer of 1857, followed by

[1] Morley's 'Life of Gladstone,' Vol. I., p. 270.

a cruelly severe sentence on a poor man, subsequently found to be insane; and also to cases occurring 'within a month of the same time, when two persons on two separate occasions were rejected as jurymen, and one of them grossly insulted by the judge and by one of the counsel, because they honestly declared that they had no theological belief; and a third, a foreigner, for the same reason was denied justice against a thief.'[1]

The same spirit was exhibited against polytheists and non-Christian monotheists. According to Mill—who as an India House official was interested in the subject—'the heads of the Evangelical party announced as their principle, for the government of Hindoos and Mahomedans, that no schools be supported by public money in which the Bible is not taught, and by necessary consequence that no money be given to any but real or pretended Christians.' And he quotes an Under-Secretary of State as laying down in a public speech the principle that toleration should be limited to 'Christians who believe in the one mediation';—thus implying that 'all who do not believe in the divinity of Christ are beyond the pale of toleration.'[2]

Believers in the one mediation who dissented from the doctrines or from the discipline of the Anglican Establishment, were at that time still obliged to contribute their money for the maintenance of its churches, if the majority of the ratepayers thought fit to impose a tax for the purpose. After a series of unsuccessful efforts, a bill for the abolition of this hateful privilege was carried through the House of Commons in 1858, but was thrown out by the Lords. Then came a decisive proof that the cause of religious liberty, so far from making way among the people, had positively lost ground. The general election of 1859 considerably reduced the Liberal majority in Parliament, and reduced it especially on ecclesiastical questions. 'Sir John Trelawny's Bill, which in the session of 1858 had passed by a majority of 63, in the session of 1860 was sent to the Lords by a majority only of 9. In 1861, it was actually defeated by the casting vote of the Speaker; in 1862, it was again defeated by a majority of 17; in 1863 by a majority of 10.'[3]

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 54–5.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

[3] 'The History of Twenty-five Years,' by Sir Spencer Walpole, Vol. II., pp. 336–7.

A great change was brought about by the general election of 1865. This had the effect of adding largely to the Liberal majority on fundamentally Liberal questions. The new House of Commons was indeed hardly more democratic than its Palmerstonian predecessor. It agreed to a vast extension of the suffrage, but against the wishes of most of its members, who partly yielded to pressure from without, and partly were tricked into political apostasy by the unscrupulous tactics of the Tory leader. This political conservatism, however, brings out into stronger relief the liberalism of the new assembly on questions relating to ecclesiastical privilege. Here it was greatly in advance of its predecessor. In 1868 the quarrel about Church-rates was finally settled by the acceptance of Gladstone's proposal that if any one refused payment of the rate it should not be recoverable by law.

A still stronger spirit of secularism was shown in reference to the abolition of University tests. It had long been a standing article of the Liberal programme that Oxford and Cambridge should be thrown open to all candidates for the higher education without distinction of creed; and a measure to that effect was supported by a large majority of the House of Commons in 1834. But it does not seem to have excited any enthusiasm out-of-doors. Even the barren honour of a B.A. degree was long grudged to Dissenters. At Cambridge they could be examined for it, but could not graduate; at Oxford they could not even matriculate until 1854, when the graduation test was also abolished. In 1856 Cambridge followed and even improved on this good example by allowing Nonconformists to proceed to the M.A. degree. 'In 1863, 1864, and 1865 attempts were made to open the universities still further, by placing Oxford on the same footing as Cambridge with regard to the admission of Dissenters to the M.A. degree, and for removing the obstacles which prevented nonconformists from becoming fellows of colleges. The last of these measures had been introduced by Mr. Goschen, and the second reading was carried by a majority of sixteen, but the bill was then dropped. Mr. Coleridge (afterwards Lord Chief Justice Coleridge) next took up the question, introducing in 1866 a bill differing in words but agreeing in substance with Mr. Goschen's, which was read a second time by a considerable majority, but proceeded no further. In 1867 the

bill was again brought forward, passed the House of Commons, but was rejected by the Lords.'[1] Next year further progress was cut short by the dissolution of Parliament.

In the spring of that year, however, the Liberal majority showed its true tendencies by a still more decisive manifestation. After getting completely out of hand on questions connected with parliamentary reform, it was for the first time rallied and reorganised under Gladstone's leadership by the introduction of resolutions aiming at the destruction of the Irish Church Establishment. These were passed, very nearly by the united strength of the party. Hopes which the event proved to be fallacious had, no doubt, much to do with this enthusiastic unanimity. It was believed that Irish discontent was largely due to the presence of a Protestant State Church on Irish soil, and would disappear with its removal. But thirty years before, when the same remedy might have been essayed with a considerably greater chance of success, it could not even have been proposed by a responsible statesman, in presence of the prevailing Protestant bigotry, as the fate of a far less drastic measure, the ill-starred Appropriation Clause, sufficiently proves. On this new occasion an appeal to the new constituencies showed that the country as well as the party was all for religious equality and the secularisation of Church property.

The new Parliament did much more than disestablish and disendow the Irish Church. It passed the first Act for the unsectarian education of the people. Every effort hitherto made in that direction had been defeated by the mutual animosity of the rival religious bodies among which the community was divided. The bill of 1807 was thrown out by the House of Lords, partly at the instigation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. A project formed in 1840 for 'establishing a state training-school was most distasteful to the bishops and other authorities of the English Church, and was, owing to their opposition, most reluctantly abandoned.'[2] In 1842 certain proposals made by Sir James Graham in connexion with the Factory Regulation Act, which, had they been carried out, would have done much for the spread of popular education, were defeated by the opposition of the Nonconformists, who feared (apparently not

[1] Molesworth's 'History of England,' Vol. III., p. 448.
[2] 'Chambers's Encyclopaedia,' Vol. IV., p. 211.

without reason) that they 'might give an unfair advantage to the Establishment.'[1] That such a bill as the measure of 1870 should pass, shows how great a revolution in public opinion had been effected since then, and even since a considerably later period. There is no need to go into the details of that bill as first introduced, or as subsequently amended. What interests us here is the provision, not originally forming part of the Ministerial proposals, that 'in schools provided or managed by school boards no catechism or religious formulary distinctive of any particular denomination should be taught.'[2]

University education was treated by the same Parliament in the same spirit, which had also animated its predecessor. The Bill for the abolition of University Tests, unavoidably postponed by the dissolution, was again brought forward as a government measure, and finally passed in 1871. As if to accentuate the significance of this success, Lord Salisbury, in the House of Lords, 'proposed to substitute for subscription to the thirty-nine articles a new test binding those who held certain offices in colleges "now subsisting" in the two Universities, not to teach anything contrary to the teaching or the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.'[3] After passing the Lords by a majority of only five, this amendment 'being rejected by the Commons was not insisted on . . . and so the bill passed in its original shape.'[4]

Equally or perhaps more significant was the Evidence Further Amendment Act of 1869, by which atheists were for the first time admitted to give evidence in Courts of Justice, thus putting an end to the scandals of which Mill had complained.[5]

The destruction of religious privilege is a thing widely different from the destruction of religious belief; and neither the great Minister to whose initiative or energetic support all these changes were due, nor the majority of his adherents outside Parliament, could be suspected of hostility to orthodox Christianity. Still, as I have said, the state of feeling which made such a revolution possible, seems to have resulted, directly

[1] 'Chambers's Encyclopaedia,' Vol. IV., p. 211.
[2] Quoted by Sir Spencer Walpole, Vol. II., pp. 408–9.
[3] Molesworth, *ut supra*, p. 450.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] 'Chambers's Encyclopaedia,' Vol. VII., p. 563.

or indirectly, from the spread of rationalism; and this derivation becomes much more probable when the political changes are viewed in connexion with their immediate intellectual antecedents in the previous decade.

Of the spread of rationalism among the most highly cultivated classes in England during the same period, more unequivocal evidence can be given. In an earlier part of this work I pointed out how very slightly the intellect of the country was affected by the deistic movement following the Revolution of 1688. When Swift, Berkeley, and Butler complain of the contempt into which religion has fallen among their contemporaries, they are either giving vent to the usual exaggeration of alarmists, or else their remarks only apply to the fashionable and pleasure-seeking society of the period. In the second half of the century, men of altogether higher distinction had begun to embrace what were called infidel opinions; but with one exception they said nothing about their unbelief in print, and rarely mentioned it in conversation—a reserve made more striking by contrast with the outspoken language of contemporary Frenchmen; while the one exception, Gibbon, is by his partly Continental education and residence almost an exception that proves the rule. On the other hand, imaginative literature and literary criticism remain untouched by doubt or even exhibit marked traces of devotional feeling.

With the Revolution begins a new era whose characteristics have already been analysed at length, and here need only be recalled by the very briefest reference. A very distinct strain of opposition to the ideals of pietism makes itself felt in much of the new poetry, fiction, and criticism, more openly in Byron, Shelley, Hazlitt, and the earlier Wordsworth, more guardedly or even unconsciously in Miss Edgeworth, Scott, Keats, Lamb, and the 'Edinburgh Review.' Then with the ascent and culmination of the religious revival comes a more complete extinction of free speech than had been known since the Reformation. There are things in Shakespeare and Bacon which would hardly have been tolerated in the age of Arnold and Newman. We have seen how the deliverance of science and philosophy was wrought. We have now to trace the parallel emancipation of literature, using for the purpose a few characteristic indications which are

not offered as having any pretension to completeness, but serving, so far as they go, to mark the drift of educated opinion.

Of these, one of the earliest occurs, rather oddly, in 'Pendennis.' It is reported that on asking a friend what struck him as the most characteristic feature in his novels, Thackeray received the unexpected answer, 'a vein of weak religious sentimentality'; and it is added that the great novelist, who particularly disliked the charge of cynicism, felt much pleased at being credited with such an amiable weakness. His pietism, however, such as it was, left him able to sympathise with the more searching theology of thinkers like the two Newmans, if, as seems likely, the following *boutade*, put into the mouth of Arthur Pendennis, expresses his own opinion: 'I see the truth in this man who worships by act of Parliament, and is rewarded with a silk apron and five thousand a year; in that man, who, driven fatally by the remorseless logic of his creed, gives up everything, friends, fame, dearest ties, closest vanities, the respect of an army of churchmen, the recognised position of a leader, and passes over, truth-impelled, to the enemy, in whose ranks he is ready to serve henceforth as a nameless private soldier: I see the truth in that man as I do in his brother, whose logic drives him to quite a different conclusion, and who, after having passed a life in vain endeavours to reconcile an irreconcilable book, flings it at last down in despair, and declares with tearful eyes and hands up to heaven, his revolt and recantation.'

Thackeray, with his unsystematic intellect, had little interest for theology and none for philosophy; nor, I believe, is there any other similar passage in the whole range of his writings. Still, for the time, it offers a remarkable instance of plain speaking, and would hardly have been ventured on before 1850; nor indeed would the reference to Francis Newman have been possible until the appearance of 'Phases of Faith' in that very year.

The following year (1851) was marked by a much bolder and more significant manifesto of literary opinion, Carlyle's 'Life of Sterling.' From his youth Carlyle had regarded the popular religion as an exploded superstition, no longer deserving serious attention or refutation. Occasional expressions in his earlier essays might be taken as indicating that he eschewed

denial on principle, and looked forward to the gradual displacement of the old by the new faith, after a more peaceable method than that of Voltaire and Gibbon. But the savage sarcasms in which he now indulged at the expense even of the most liberal Christianity show that his previous self-restraint had been due to some other motive. According to a profound and accurate observer, Alexander Bain, this was simply fear of public opinion. To tell what he really thought 'would have been fatal to his success; yet he was not a man to indulge in rank hypocrisy. He accordingly adopted a studied and ambiguous phraseology, which for long imposed on the religious public, who put their own interpretation upon his mystical utterances.'[1] Bain adds that when, in the Life of Sterling, 'he threw off the mask he was not taken at his word.' This seems a mistake; for at least one contemporary critic, George Brimley, takes Carlyle rather sharply to task for giving pain to religious believers.[2] Certainly, for whatever reason, the offence was not repeated, and Sterling's successors received no encouragement, but rather the contrary, from his biographer, who thenceforth only showed his theological leanings by violent abuse of the Roman Catholic Church.

Carlyle, like Thackeray, had in fact taken advantage of the momentary relief given by Francis Newman's spirited revolt against the prevalent terrorism; but as its effect wore off the muzzle was put back on literature, although in a rather easier form. Not until six years later do we come on a decisive instance of the progress made by toleration. This is supplied by a novel called 'Thorndale,' published in 1857. The author, William Smith, was forty-nine when he published it, but till then had made little mark in literature. He had been a friend of Mill, and was one of the first to spread Comte's fame in England. Positivism may have interested him more on the historical and reconstructive than on the scientific side. At any rate, in 'Thorndale,' so far as it gives a clue to his own religious opinions, he appears to take the side of philosophical theism. For us the significant thing about the book is its steady ignoring of Christianity as an element in what most interests the author, the future progress of mankind, accompanied

[1] Bain's 'Practical Essays,' p. 274.

[2] George Brimley's 'Essays,' p. 222.

by a not obscure intimation that those who still hanker after its consolations will find their most appropriate haven in the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church. Contemporary criticism on the orthodox side touched with some sourness on this indifference to its claims, and rather resented the author's method of evading responsibility for the expression of unbelief by throwing his exposition into the form of a series of dialogues carried on between fictitious characters. But no other way of giving a popular literary version of the negative side would then have been tolerated; and it was a long step in advance that so much as this should have been permitted.

George Eliot's 'Scenes of Clerical Life' first appeared in 'Blackwood's Magazine' in 1857, the year when 'Thorndale' was published. Of these stories the third and best, 'Janet's Repentance,' alone has any religious interest. John Blackwood, who had not been afraid to take the risk of 'Thorndale,' made some difficulties about this apparently much less doubtful performance. George Eliot's published letters do not fully explain the nature of his scruples; nor perhaps could they have been very clearly stated. With our knowledge of her religious opinions it is easy enough to see that this, the most perfect of all her fictions, evinces, more than any of its successors, a complete absence of religious belief. She had acquired, possibly under Comte's influence, a great dislike for negative criticism—carrying it, indeed, to much greater lengths than Comte himself, who never concealed his contempt and hatred for Christianity as such. At the same time, her German studies, combined with Comte's own later teaching, had led her to recognise an indestructible element of good in religion, perpetuating in George Eliot the early experiences of Marian Evans. To dissociate this element from its theological husk seems to have been one of her permanent objects as a novelist; and a rare combination of moral sincerity with literary skill enabled her to do this without either the false assumption of religious belief or the scandal of its direct negation.

In the story I have named, Janet Dempster, the wife of a brutal low-class attorney, who has been led to seek forgetfulness of her sufferings in intemperance, is redeemed from evil courses by the ministrations of an Evangelical clergyman, to whose persecution she had formerly been a party. But there are

unmistakable intimations that Janet's conversion has little or nothing to do with supernatural threats or promises: it is effected through the operation of purely human sympathies, awakened by her intercourse with Mr. Tryan, the Evangelical pastor. And the moral conveyed is that the same result might be obtained as well under the profession of any other theological belief, or in the absence of any such belief—possibly best of all under an organised religion of humanity.

John Blackwood may well have feared that this sort of literary positivism, were it detected and exposed, might ruin his reputation as an orthodox publisher, although 'Thorndale' had left it unblemished. And had the feeling of the country or the power of the Churches still been what it was in 1830, when 'Milman's History of the Jews' excited such a storm, the career of the great Comtist novelist might have been abruptly checked. But a public grown more heterodox or more indifferent were determined that no such considerations should interfere with their enjoyment of the new-found treasure, deliberately shutting their eyes to any snares that it might contain; and George Eliot continued to publish every year some new version of the same gospel with ever-increasing success. It became more and more widely known that she had also translated Strauss, and edited the 'Westminster Review'; but although certain critics endeavoured to excite a prejudice against her on that score, their efforts proved totally unavailing—as unavailing as the pointed references of others to the circumstances of her private life.

Carlyle, the author of 'Thorndale,' and George Eliot, had been freethinkers from their early years; and the popularity of those late-born works in which their heterodox opinions were more or less brought to the knowledge of the great public, has been quoted as a proof of the extent to which rationalism, or at least the toleration of rationalism, had been diffused. We have now to study a more significant and interesting symptom of the same process, the relaxation of early religious convictions in some of the greatest English minds under the influence of the time-spirit.

I have already referred to Ruskin as the greatest intellectual representative of Evangelicalism in the forties, after its temporary

triumph over the Tractarian movement, and again as a powerful though unwilling contributor to the ritualistic development of High Church principles twenty years later. At that date he had already ceased to hold any dogmatic belief whatever. Whether his was a naturally religious nature may well be doubted; at any rate the peculiar form of his early faith was due to the Puritan teaching of his mother, whose intense Sabbatarianism brought on his childhood the only unhappiness that it knew. So deeply ingrained, however, were her lessons that not until his thirtieth year did the illustrious art-critic venture to paint a flower on Sunday. On another Sunday in the same year he went from a Waldensian chapel to the picture gallery at Turin, and found that no Evangelical hymns he had ever listened to were so truly devotional as 'the swells and falls of military music,' floating in from the courtyard before the palace. Veronese's colouring completed the effect; and from that day his Evangelical beliefs 'were put away to be debated of no more.'[1]

In fact, it had been slowly breaking on Ruskin for some years past that the religious doctrines in which he had been educated were false. They were not dismissed without a fair trial. All his earlier writings, including the greater part of 'Modern Painters' and all the 'Stones of Venice,' are essentially pietistic. Renaissance architecture and the later renaissance painting are condemned above all as pagan, Gothic and prae-Raphaelite art lauded as Christian. English landscape painting escapes the general censure by virtue of its Protestantism and a certain mysterious flavour of natural theology. True, the greatest English landscape painter had no religious belief whatever; but his admirer long kept the unpleasant fact out of sight. If the worship of beauty could be combined with Puritanism, so also could the worship of Turner.

Classical scholarship, Hellenism, Greek ideals of beauty, have rescued many from the Puritan yoke. Strangely enough, Ruskin long remained impervious to their charm; Christchurch left him with a very superficial knowledge of Greek. Besides, it was disagreeably associated with the Renaissance, whose classicalism, he thought, was based on infidelity[2]—a statement

[1] 'Praeterita,' Vol. III., p. 38.

[2] 'Stones of Venice,' Vol. I., p. 34.

which would have been more correct had it been put the other way round. The inspiration received from antiquity by Dante and the early Tuscan artists remained conveniently ignored. It was scandalous that Raphael should give the school of Athens a place in the Stanze of the Vatican,[1] but apparently quite in order that the 'Paradiso' should be saturated with Aristotelian philosophy. It is true that Ruskin did not confound classicalism with the classic, nor the Greeks with their imitators. But in his earlier writings he never betrays any enthusiasm for the Greek spirit, and treats Greek religion with an injustice which he afterwards frankly acknowledged.[2] And, what deserves particular attention, he expressly condemns the classical scholars of the Renaissance for what was most beautiful about them, for that enthusiasm of which he was still incapable, but which he was one day to share. The reason given is curious, and very characteristic of his Evangelical training. According to his view, 'the human mind is not capable of more than a certain amount of admiration or reverence, and that which was given to Horace was withdrawn from David. *Religion is of all subjects that which will least endure a second place in the heart or thoughts, and a languid and occasional study of it was sure to lead to error or infidelity.*'[3]

I have italicised the last sentence, because it so admirably expresses the pietistic point of view, soon to be abandoned by the writer himself. It has been said that Ruskin remained untouched by the Oxford Movement, and this in a sense is true; but only on the condition of admitting that he represented a different, an independent, and a later variety of the same tendency. Like Newman, he came out of the Evangelical school; and like Newman, or rather like Hurrell Froude, he brought its religious fervour into an unstable alliance with the romanticist and mediaevalising current of contemporary art and erudition. With both, the work begun in England was completed in Italy; and under that twofold inspiration Newman gave pietism its most poignant and sombre, Ruskin its most opulent and ornate, expression. Both learned to look on Protestantism, and especially on its Anglican form, as a mere imitative parasite

[1] 'Lectures on Architecture and Painting,' p. 206.
[2] 'Modern Painters,' Vol II., p. 238, note.
[3] 'Stones of Venice,' Vol. III., p. 106.

of Rome. But the student of Venetian marbles, coming twenty years later than the preacher of St. Mary's, rejected with contempt what had once been the unquestioned religious alternative, and in his own phrase could 'no more become a Catholic than he could become a fire-worshipper, or believe in the living Pope than in the living Khan of Tartary.'[1]

He could not, for the redeeming influence of Hellenism had intervened. The last volume of 'The Stones of Venice' and the 'Lectures on Architecture and Painting' were published in 1853, the third volume of 'Modern Painters' in 1856. The difference in their respective treatment of the Greeks is startling. That people are now credited with a deep if limited love of nature; their life is healthy and in a certain degree perfect; their religion is not in the least what 'the bitter short-sightedness of Puritanism' has imagined.[2] And we are reminded that 'the choice of Leonidas between the alternatives granted him by the oracle of personal death, or ruin to his country,' was not 'altogether a work of the Devil's prompting.'[3]

In a lecture on Pre-Raphaelitism, delivered in November, 1853, Leonidas had been mentioned with precisely the same reference to his performance of duty from a religious motive; and so far the point of view seems to have remained unaltered. Nevertheless, on looking closer we find a difference. On the earlier occasion the Spartan king had been introduced to point a contrast with Nelson, whose sense of duty and self-devotion equalled the Greek's, but were not, like his, inspired by religion. On the later occasion the rebuke is administered not to modern infidelity, but to modern Puritanism. As Ruskin's faith was first nourished and afterwards decomposed by contact with mediaeval Catholicism, so his Christianity, after having been confirmed by observing the equal devotion of the Greeks to their gods, is now a little shaken by what seems the equal justification of the pagan faith which it destroyed, and long

[1] Praeterita,' Vol. III., p. 31.

[2] Oddly enough, modern philosophy is charged with instilling false views on the subject, which 'all the pure lightning of Carlyle cannot as yet quite burn out of us' ('Modern Painters,' Vol. III., p. 180). Only the most iniquitous prejudice has caused the name of one who did nothing for the Greeks to be substituted for the name of Grote, who did so much.

[3] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. III., p. 180.

continued to denounce as devil-worship. His own faith had originally been taken, much against the grain, on authority, and then verified (on ophelistic principles) by its power to produce goodness and beauty. He must now have been rather impressed at finding the highest goodness compatible with a false religion, or with the absence of all religion. The dissolution of authority by its inward self-contradictoriness had begun.

There is little reference to the Greeks in the fourth volume of 'Modern Painters,' but that little is to their praise. We are told that they owe their intellectual lead to their half-unconscious perception of mountain beauty—a derivation which may or may not be true, but which, coming from Ruskin, betokens an increased admiration for Hellenic things.

In 1859 this admiration has got so far that the critic indignantly repels the charge of ever having attacked or despised Greek work. He has 'never spoken of it but with a reverence quite infinite,'[1] in proof of which rather startling assertion nothing is quoted but a single passage about Pheidias from Vol. II. of 'Modern Painters.' Certainly in 'The Stones of Venice' his love had been rather successfully dissembled.

A year more and the conversion is complete. For the tone in which the Greeks are spoken of in the last and what some think the greatest volume of 'Modern Painters,' reverence is too weak a word. Never before and never since has their conception of life been celebrated with such rapturous adoration, or in language of such passionate splendour. And the significant thing is that what so excites Ruskin's enthusiasm is neither their power of artistic production, nor the vastness of their garnered knowledge, nor the depth and divination of their thought, but the disinterestedness, the heroic purity of their virtue. They have no belief in compensation after death, nor evidently has he. 'They have not lifted up their souls unto vanity.' 'Whether there be consolation for them or not, neither apathy nor blindness shall be their saviour; if, for them thus knowing the facts of the grief of earth, any hope, relief, or triumph may hereafter seem possible,—well; but if not, still hopeless, reliefless, eternal, the sorrow shall be met face to face. . . . With no better reward, no brighter hope, we will be men while we may; men just and strong, and fearless,

[1] 'The Two Paths,' p. 98.

and up to our power, perfect. . . . The gods have given us at least this glorious body and this righteous conscience; these will we keep bright and pure to the end. So may we fall to misery but not to baseness; so may we sink to sleep but not to shame. And herein was conquest. Death was swallowed up in victory . . . so that they could put off their armour and lie down to sleep, whether at the gates of their temples or of their mountains; accepting what they once thought terrible, as the gift of Him who knew and granted what was best.'[1]

In this respect the Venetians, with all their nobility, fell below the Greeks. 'In their inner mind they are less serious; in their superficial temper sadder. . . . The reference to a future world has a morbid influence on all their conclusions. For the earth and its natural elements are despised. They are to pass away like a scroll. Man the immortal is alone revered. . . . Nature is but a terror or a temptation. She is for hermits, martyrs, murderers.'[2]

The pietistic temper enables its possessors to put away grief and fear, but is for that very reason to be deprecated. Its 'attainment is never possible without inducing some form of intellectual weakness. No painter belonging to the purest religious schools ever mastered his art. Perugino nearly did so; but it was because he was more rational—more a man of the world—than the rest.[3] No literature exists of a high class produced by minds in the pure religious temper;' the reason being that man was 'not intended to look away from the place he lives in now, and cheer himself with the thought of the place he is to live in next, but that he should' try to improve the place he lives in now. 'And this kind of brave but not very hopeful or cheerful faith is always rewarded by clear practical success and splendid intellectual power; while the faith which dwells on the future fades away into rosy mist and emptiness of musical air.'[4]

At some unspecified date previous to 1865 Ruskin, when asked what he believed, replied, 'simply nothing.'[5] At a later

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. V., pp. 235–7.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 242.

[3] Ruskin might have mentioned that Perugino did not believe in a future life.

[4] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. V., pp. 228–9.

[5] Augustus Hare, 'The Story of my Life,' Vol. II., p. 484.

period again, under the influence of deep personal sorrow, he gave some credence to spiritualistic manifestations. But the belief in a future life never recovered any practical or religious value in his teaching. And in the Epilogue to 'Modern Painters,' dated 1888, he points out with satisfaction that the religious faith on which his art teaching had been based from the beginning knows nothing 'of any tradition of Fall, or of any scheme of Redemption; nothing of Eternal Punishment, nothing of Immortal Life.'

We saw how the great religious revival took for its basis the sense of sin; and how this fact was emphasised by William Wilberforce, by Coleridge, by J. H. Newman, and even, in his believing phase, by John Sterling. Nothing, again, more clearly indicates the dissolution of pietism than the repudiation of sin as such a fundamental fact by J. A. Froude and Arthur Hugh Clough. On this point also Ruskin's language is quite unmistakable. 'The horror and shame of the false Evangelical Religion is in its recommending its souls to God, not for their humility, but their sin.' Sin is correctly interpreted by the old Greek word, 'missing the mark.' Nor will he countenance that attenuated mystical version of the doctrine which finds the origin of evil in selfhood. 'As soon as you are shut off from the rest of the universe into a self you begin to be alive.' And he meets the objection that the life of the soul is in communion, not separation, by the just remark that 'there can be no communion where there is no distinction.'[1]

Still less did he believe in the natural depravity of which young children used to be quoted as examples by the Evangelicals. Little girls at least—of whom he was very fond—did not give him the impression of being deceitful and desperately wicked; nor did he like them to be taught what was manifestly false. A pretty scene in the 'Ethics of the Dust' illustrates his way—a rather Greek way—of exposing its absurdity. Lucilla (aged fifteen), after confessing, in deference to religious teaching, that she has an entirely bad heart, is asked to pull two hairs out of the cat's tail, and refuses, on the ground that it would hurt pussy, offering two of her own instead. Then follows a Socratic cross-examination, too long for transcription, as the result of

[1] 'Ethics of the Dust,' pp. 46–7.

which original sin, if any, turns out to be a thing so very deep-seated as to elude all but the most careful and long-continued scrutiny, while the habit of searching for it is condemned as morbid and misleading. 'Never call yourself merely "a sinner"; that is very cheap abuse and utterly useless. . . . Check yourself in whatever fault you have ascertained and justly accused yourself of.' Better still, do not think of your faults at all, but try to practise virtues, and if you fail, 'think that it does not much matter to the universe what you are; think how many people are noble if you cannot be; and rejoice in their nobleness.'[1]

Like Ruskin, Robert Browning came of a Puritan stock, and like him received a religious training of the orthodox type, which has left deep traces on his earlier poems; nor are his latest altogether free from its influence. There is, however, this difference between them, that while Ruskin's primary religious interest attached itself to 'the presence and guidance of a Personal Deity,' leaving immortality as an open question, Browning, on the contrary, was preoccupied by the latter problem, to such an extent that no creed which left it unsolved could have had any religious value for him. God was indeed much more certain than a future life; but that certainty, taken alone, would hardly have consoled him for the loss of the other less dogmatic belief. And his rejection rather late in life of Christianity, due primarily, like Ruskin's, to the time-spirit, seems to have been more specifically determined by a recoil from the dreadful implications of immortality in the Christian creed as ordinarily understood.

With most of his admirers Browning passes for a great philosopher; but his intellect had nothing of the logical or scientific strain, nor was his reading, though wide, likely to bring it into contact with the critical results of contemporary thought. The study of Greek literature might, as with Ruskin, have supplied their place, but he did not take it up seriously until his later years. Prolonged residence in Italy, and absorption in the society of a wife still more pietistically educated than himself, must also have helped to retard the natural development of the poet's theology.

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 92–9.

Of his faith in 1850 we get a very distinct idea from 'Christmas Eve and Easter Day.' This poem is a screed of doggrel verse, containing for its only valuable element a wealth of imagery alternately grotesque and sublime, which serves to illustrate a rather threadbare defence of orthodox Broad Church Christianity. Browning takes his views of the Gospel entirely from the Johannine writings. God is love, and has revealed himself as such most of all through the person of Jesus Christ, who showed the boundlessness of the love embodied in him by giving his life for the world. To regard him as a mere moralist is a shallow view. No other moral teacher has ever set himself up as an object of worship, as in some peculiar sense a participant in the divine nature. Nor did men particularly need to be taught morality. They intuitively recognised the distinction between right and wrong before his advent. Christ by his example furnished them with a motive to mutual love unknown before. Had he been no more than a man, as the Germans with their mythic theories pretend, there would be little reason for setting him up as an object of superlative admiration, or for calling ourselves Christians. The silliest dissenting rant and the blindest Roman superstition, are far preferable to the philosophy of Strauss. And so on, and so on.

At the same time Browning is no pietist; and he seems to deprecate such a strong conviction of the supernatural world as would prevent us from thoroughly understanding and enjoying the actual world, the face of nature, the ideals of art (including undraped statues of beautiful women), the revelations of science, and the treasures of human affection. These things are the preparation for a larger life to come. It is very hard to be a Christian; but not hard for the reasons commonly supposed. The difficulty does not consist in making sacrifices which would be found easy enough if no more were demanded than a brief endurance of privation and suffering, to be succeeded by an unending life of enjoyment; nor yet does it consist in the surrender of doubt, on a reasonable probability that the Christian revelation may be true. It consists rather—for Browning—in preserving that precise equilibrium between the Church and the world which may best be defined as making the most of the present life, while supplementing its deficiencies with a hopeful outlook on the next. In reality this attitude, which our poet

seemed to regard as a profoundly philosophic solution of the religious problem, amounted to no more than a provisional and highly unstable compromise between the competitive attractions of his early training and his artistic temperament, destined to be silently let drop as the years went on, and the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere fell several degrees on the scale of faith. The proposed adjustment of conflicting claims was not entirely personal—indeed it had been partly anticipated by Tennyson;—but it could not be permanently accepted by either party to the great controversy, even if difficulties not contemplated by the poet of 'Easter Day' could have been prevented from intruding on his optimistic dreams.

In 'Men and Women,' published five years later, the orthodox tone is still maintained. 'Cleon' presents the argument from emotional ophelism with poignant condensation:

> '. . . every day my sense of joy
> Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
> By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen;
> While every day my hairs fall more and more,
> My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—
> The horror quickening still from year to year,
> The consummation coming past escape
> When I shall know most and yet least enjoy;'

—to be followed by a time when his works alone shall live in men's mouths while he, their author, shall sleep in his urn—

> 'It is so horrible,
> I dare at times imagine to my need
> Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
> Unlimited in capability
> For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
> — To seek which the joy-hunger forces us:
> . . . . . .
> But no!
> Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,
> He must have done so, were it possible!'

Cleon has heard of 'one called Paulus,' supposed to have thrown new light on this important subject; but understands from what reports have reached him that the Pauline or Christian doctrine, 'could be held by no sane man.'

At the end of 'Bishop Blougram's Apology,' published in the same volume, unbelievers are referred to the 'last chapter

of St. John,' as affording good ground for accepting Christianity; and a third poem, 'Karshish,' gives a dramatic account of how Lazarus may be supposed to have talked and acted in the later years of his second life. At this stage Browning seems, like Dr. Arnold, to have looked on the Gospel according to John as an impregnable fortress of Christianity. Here the first period of his religious life reaches its final literary expression. It probably ended, and the second began, with his wife's death in 1861. We have now to study this second stage with such help as his successive publications afford.

'Dramatis Personae' appeared in 1864. One of the pieces which that volume contains, called 'A Death in the Desert,' clearly refers to the theological storm then raging, and more especially to Renan's recently published 'Vie de Jésus.' To all appearances Browning still remains unshaken in his old convictions. Walter Bagehot exclaims in a review of the new volume, 'he has battered his brain against his creed until he believes it.'[1] But on a closer inspection the creed seems to be giving way more than the brain. 'A Death in the Desert' purports to supply a new defence of Christianity, thrown into the form of an address delivered by St. John the Evangelist to a little band of disciples just before his death. The authenticity of his Gospel is still of course assumed, but with certain incidental concessions to criticism. Miracles were good evidence for the first converts, but would not be appropriate to the present advanced state of mankind, which the aged Apostle is represented as foreseeing. Nor is their literal reality insisted on. Perhaps after all they were no more than subjective appearances:

> 'Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o' the world,
> Whether the change came from our minds which see
> Of shows o' the world so much as and no more
> Than God wills for His purpose . . .
> . . . I know not; such was the effect.'

Real or imaginary, miracles served as a protecting fence planted round the seed-plot until the herbs grew up, and then the tree is proved by its fruit:

> 'this book's fruit is plain,
> Nor miracles need prove it any more.'

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[1] 'Literary Studies,' Vol. II., p. 376.

And there is a guarded hint that the narrative itself need not be taken as a literal record of John's experiences:

> 'Remember all! It is not much to say.
> What if the truth broke on me from above
> As once and ofttimes?'

For the rest, in some concluding lines, for which John himself is not made responsible, Christ's divinity is asserted in the strongest possible language as the necessary condition for the fulfilment of his love towards men. Otherwise he would not 'grow incorporate with all.'

Far the finest piece in the volume is 'Caliban on Setebos,' a poem which is said to have first convinced the general public of Browning's genius. It was suggested by a couple of references in the 'Tempest' to a god worshipped by Caliban or by his mother; and it works out in detail the idea of such a deity, as one may suppose it to have been conceived by a half-human monster. It seems improbable that the great didactic poet should have performed this feat merely as an exercise in imaginative psychology, without throwing some sidelights on contemporary theology. Thus when we find Caliban describing the capricious irresponsible way in which he torments or pets living things weaker than himself, and imagines Setebos using his power after the same fashion, the inference seems irresistible that Browning has the Calvinistic doctrines of election and reprobation in his eye; and again when the uncouth natural theologian is interrupted in the middle of his speculations by a thunderstorm, and begins earnestly protesting his love for Setebos, with vows that he 'will not eat this month one little mess of whelks so he may 'scape,'—is not this an unmistakable satire on our days of national fasting and humiliation?

Five years later we come on more unequivocal evidence of the direction that Browning's thoughts were taking. It will be remembered as one of the incidents in the story of the 'Ring and the Book' that Count Guido Franceschini is put to the torture in order to extract from him a confession of his guilt. I do not know whether it had ever before been made a matter of reproach to the Christian Churches that they never protested against this cruel and senseless practice, inherited from the judicial procedure of heathen states, and finally abolished in

deference to the arguments of freethinking eighteenth-century philosophers. At any rate, the fact is so; and Browning pauses to enforce the lesson without the least artistic necessity to do so—rather indeed against artistic principles, for the effect is to enlist our sympathies for the moment on Guido's side, and in language so remarkably clumsy as to show that his feelings had got the better of his taste:

> 'Religion used to tell Humanity
> She gave him warrant or denied him course.
> And since the course was much to his own mind,
> Of pinching flesh and pulling bone from bone
> To unhusk truth a-hiding in its hulls,
> Nor whisper of a warning stopped the way,
> He, in their joint behalf, the burly slave,
> Bestirred him, mauled and maimed all recusants,
> While, prim in place, Religion overlooked;
> And so had done till doomsday, never a sign
> Nor sound of interference from her mouth,
> But that at last the burly slave wiped brow,
> Let eye give notice as if soul were there,
> Muttered "'tis a vile trick, foolish more than vile,
> Should have been counted sin; I make it so:
> At any rate no more of it for me—
> Nay, for I break the torture-engine thus!"
> Then did Religion start up, stare amain,
> Look round for help and see none, smile and say
> "What, broken is the rack? Well done of thee!
> Did I forget to abrogate its use?
> Be the mistake in common with us both!
> —One more fault our blind age shall answer for,
> Down in my book denounced though it must be
> Somewhere. Henceforth find truth by milder means!"
> Ah but, Religion, did we wait for thee
> To ope the book, that serves to sit upon,
> And pick such place out, we should wait indeed!'[1]

Seldom, if ever, has better sense been worse expressed.

On various occasions Browning has shown a bitter hostility to the Roman Church, without parallel in English poetry. It is therefore the more remarkable that in this instance, where the opportunity almost offered itself, he has not made Rome, nor even Catholicism, responsible for countenancing the use of torture. His satire falls on Religion in general, and on Protestant no less than on Catholic Christianity. Her book, where 'it

[1] 'The Ring and the Book,' I., lines 985–1012 ('Robert Browning's Works,' Vol. VIII., pp. 40–1).

must be denounced somewhere,' is the Bible; and we certainly might wait for ever before the text turned up.

We were taught by 'A Death in the Desert' that the religion of love, after outgrowing the need for miraculous attestation, was to appeal for evidence to its fruits. Yet the revelation of love has shown neither the will nor the power to abolish or even protest against one of the worst manifestations of human hate. Six years later 'The Inn Album' (1875) introduces us—again for the first time in English poetry—to another such manifestation. Here Browning's satire is even less relevant to his main subject, and may therefore be taken, with at least equal probability, for an expression of personal feeling. A lady of culture and refinement, married to a country clergyman, complains that her husband's sermons give undue prominence to the doctrine of eternal damnation:

> 'Hell he made explicit. After death
> Life: man created new, ingeniously
> Perfect for a vindictive purpose now
> That man, first fashioned in beneficence,
> Was proved a failure . . .
> . . . . . .
> A faculty of immense suffering
> Conferred on mind and body,—mind . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . revived by miracle
> To bear no end of burthen now that back
> Supported torture to no use at all,
> And live imperishably potent.'

There is no pretence that this doctrine is either unscriptural or unchristian. The appeal against it is to natural religion:

> 'One healthy view of things
> One sane sight of the general ordinance—
> Nature,—and its particular object—man,'

or—

> 'one mere eye-cast on the character
> Of Who made these and gave man sense to boot.'

Nor is it any use:—

> '*They* desire
> Such Heaven and dread such Hell, whom every day
> The ale-house tempts from one, a dog-fight bids
> Defy the other?'

Later still the same thought is repeated in 'Ixion' (1883), where the victim of Zeus proclaims from his wheel of torment

how much better man is than an avenging God who eternally tortures the work of his own hands for being what he foresaw that by the force of circumstances it needs must be.

Always hateful, this doctrine of hell becomes most hateful when suffering after death is proclaimed as a penalty for religious scepticism. The poet imagines himself as yearning for the presence of an unseen friend of whose great actions he has heard much, but who, so far, has only communicated with him by letter. Then doubts which he cannot dispel are thrown on the authenticity of the letters and the reality of the deeds. So much the worse, he thinks; but even so to have ever believed in such a friend remains a sustaining thought through life :—

> 'Ah, but there's a menace some one utters!'

namely, that my friend has been playing a cruel game with me all the time, concealing himself in order ultimately to make me responsible for not having seen him—through a brick wall—and to punish me severely for my blindness.

> '"Why, that makes your friend a monster," say you:
> "Had his house no window? At first nod,
> Would you not have hailed him?" Hush, I pray you!
> What if this friend happens to be—God?'[1]

To the next year (1877) belong Browning's most explicit declarations on the subject of a future life. They occur in the well-known poem, 'La Saisiaz,' written in commemoration of his friend Miss Egerton-Smith, who died suddenly the morning after a walk with him up La Salève near Geneva. From our point of view we may look on it as a final answer to Cleon's argument that if Zeus had prepared a future state of bliss for us he would certainly have revealed it to us—an argument evidently intended by Cleon's creator as contributory to the *a priori* probability of Christianity. In 'La Saisiaz' we are taught on the contrary, by Reason speaking against Fancy, that any such revelation would be fatal to the happiness of our present life by diverting men's thoughts from its interests and duties. In this connexion nothing is more strongly insisted on than the demoralising influence of a belief in future rewards and punishments. With the promulgation of such sanctions

[1] 'Fears and Scruples,' 1876 ('Works,' Vol. XIV., pp. 54–7).

for conduct, good and evil, according to Reason, 'cease to be—'

> 'Once lay down the law, with Nature's simple "such effects succeed
> Causes such, and heaven or hell depends upon man's earthly deed."
> . . . . . .
> Thenceforth neither good nor evil does man, doing what he must,
> Lay but down that law as stringent, "Wouldst thou live again, be just."'

And this remains true, notwithstanding the old adage—

> '"The best
> I both see and praise, the worst I follow;"' for man 'disbelieves
> In the heart of him that edict which for truth his head receives;'

—just as we were told before by the lady of the 'Inn Album.'

He who could so write had ceased to be a Christian; nor in fact is there any reference to the poet's former faith from one end of this magnificent elegy to the other. It closes, significantly enough, with a rapturous characterisation of Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon, and Byron—names recalled by their association with Lake Leman, and quoted, in pity for those who want authority, as authorities for the truth of natural religion. For splendour of diction this passage may be compared with what has been well called the 'Greek Hymn' in 'Modern Painters,' and even set above it through the superiority of great poetry to great prose.

Younger poets than Browning were not prepared to remain at the standpoint of eighteenth-century deism. We have seen how Matthew Arnold, who embodied far more completely than the dreamy author of 'Christmas Eve and Easter Day' the most advanced speculative tendencies of his age, had already given them an audacious expression in 'Empedocles on Etna.' In this instance, however, the speculation seemed rather too advanced; and the young prophet speedily found an excuse for withdrawing his confession of unfaith from publicity. For many years Arnold kept his religious opinions to himself, and, much to his discredit, even joined in the hue and cry against Colenso. Perhaps the very cool reception given to his distinction between truth and edification may have led him to reconsider his critical position, with the result of discovering that the time-spirit was better served by plain-speaking than by time-serving reticences or equivocations. At any rate, in

1867 he reissued 'Empedocles,' and followed it up by a new poem of still more unveiled rationalism, entitled 'Obermann Once More.'

'Obermann' is the name of a philosophical romance written early in the nineteenth century by E. de Senancour, a young French noble who had found shelter from the storms of the Revolution in Switzerland, and under the influence of personal calamities had developed profoundly pessimistic views of life. After a long period of neglect, his work attracted the notice of the romanticists under Louis Philippe, with whose literary predilections it happened to chime in, and their praise secured for it a permanent if inconspicuous position among the classics of the emigration. But in the world's literature 'Obermann' will live longer by what it suggested to Matthew Arnold than by any merit of its own. One of his earlier poems ranks its author with Goethe and Wordsworth as a foremost teacher of the age, even to some extent putting him above them for his clearer discernment of what life can give and what thought can tell. This, no doubt, was an enormous exaggeration. Still a portrait of Senancour drawn in the early fifties, that is to say in the gloomy period which followed the failure of the second French Republic, could not but retain some lineaments of the original figure. 'Obermann Once More' belongs to the late sixties—that period of hope and joy, when oppression seemed to be giving way along the whole line, when so many problems had been solved, so many others were nearing their solution. Arnold has become an enthusiastic optimist; and Obermann, much to his astonishment, must undergo the same transformation. Nothing remains of his old habits but a taste for Alpine scenery—and that too has been shifted from the awful Gemmi Pass to the lovely walks between Glion and the Dent de Jaman. Here the hermit-sage meets the English poet in the course of his summer holiday, and recites for his benefit in a series of glowing stanzas the grandest view of universal history that verse has ever framed, too long to quote and too pregnant to compress. The unspeakable corruption of Roman society under the Caesars; the new message of deliverance from sin thought out by the awe-struck East; the conversion of a world-wide empire to asceticism, won by the magnetism of Jesus as a child in his mother's arms, or nailed as a victim to the cross;—then

the slow perishing of what had lived only while we believed in it, leaving behind a corpse, a Church still uttering its wonted speech, but a speech of which every word is dead; the revolutionary storm descending to sweep away that mockery; and lastly the return of calm weather, with its sun looking down on 'fragments of a broken world,' with men still blindly clinging to the wreck, in lamentable ignorance that the past cannot be revived;—all these are made defile before us with an enthralling magic such as may be rivalled in the pages of a Lucretius or a Goethe, but in theirs alone.

Were this grand historic pageant exhibited merely as a work of art it would still be admirable. But it is much more than that: the singing-robes are a prophet's mantle, his lips are touched with a burning coal, and filled with a message of destiny and duty. Our business is, first of all, to see the facts as they are, to acknowledge with Clough that Christ is not risen:

> '"Now he is dead! Far hence he lies
> In the lorn Syrian town,
> And on his grave, with shining eyes,
> The Syrian stars look down.
>
> '"In vain men still, with hoping new,
> Regard his death-place dumb,
> And say the stone is not yet to,
> And wait for words to come.
>
> '"Ah, from that silent sacred land,
> Of sun, and arid stone,
> And crumbling wall, and sultry sand,
> Comes now one word alone!
>
> '"From David's lips this word did roll,
> 'Tis true and living yet:
> *No man can save his brother's soul,*
> *Nor pay his brother's debt.*
>
> . . . . . .
>
> '"Your creeds are dead, your rites are dead,
> Your social order too!
> Where tarries he, the Power who said,
> *See, I make all things new?*"'

The new truth Obermann could not reach, his younger follower is to proclaim:

> '"What still of strength is left, employ,
> That end to help men gain:
> *One mighty wave of thought and joy*
> *Lifting mankind amain!*"'

To tell how Arnold fulfilled, or tried to fulfil, the dreamed-of commission, belongs to a later part of this work. At present we have to study some even more defiant manifestations of rationalism in English poetry.

In the spring of 1865 'Atalanta in Calydon' took the reading world by storm, and showed that Tennyson and Browning were not to pass away without leaving a worthy successor. It was not the author's first publication, but it was the first that appealed to the general taste, and to the Hellenism which had been steadily gaining ground outside the circle of professional scholarship ever since James Mill incorporated it with the Benthamite programme. Neither in 'Atalanta' nor in the two plays that preceded it has Mr. Swinburne taken occasion to define his attitude towards religious belief; for the attacks on the gods which occur in his classic drama might pass for expressions of a merely heathen mood. Yet so keen was the inquisitorial scrutiny then exercised on every new manifestation of genius that a Roman Catholic reviewer called attention to the young poet's complete want of faith, and to 'the miserable vacuum created by its absence.'[1]

If any doubt remained on this point in the minds of more charitable critics, it was speedily removed by Mr. Swinburne's next great achievement, 'Poems and Ballads,' published in 1866. Here, where the writer's powers showed themselves at the highest level they were ever destined to reach, two of the finest pieces celebrate Proserpina, the Queen of Death, as the one goddess who will survive all other gods, the new objects of adoration introduced by Christianity no less than the older divinities whom they have superseded. In all the flux of things there is one thing we may be sure of, 'the sleep eternal in an eternal night,' for which let us 'thank with brief thanksgiving whatever gods there be.' But, faith for faith, the Olympian mythology, with its Apollo and its Aphrodite, made a much more satisfactory religion than Catholicism with its relic-worship, its crucifixes, and its anaemic Madonnas.

Yet however daring the Hellenistic rationalism of 'Poems and Ballads' may have seemed, it fades into insignificance when compared with the triumphant atheism of 'Songs Before

[1] 'The Tablet,' August 12, 1865.

Sunrise,' published five years later, in 1871. The overthrow of a Catholic despotism in France and of the Temporal Power in Rome, together with the consolidation of a secularising government in Italy, gave the rising tide of religious negation in England such confidence as had never been felt before; and Christianity was made to pay with merciless severity for the complicity of its official representatives in the system of oppression whose doom seemed to have been pronounced. Mr. Swinburne occupied a peculiar and somewhat ambiguous position in the revolutionary movement. His new volume was dedicated to Joseph Mazzini, whose political creed he seems on the whole to adopt; and his sympathy with Victor Hugo is equally pronounced. Yet these illustrious democrats were both of them fervent theists, inheriting the traditions of the earlier eighteenth century and its enthusiasm for natural religion. Their young English disciple, on the other hand, recognises no religion but the worship of Humanity, pity for its sufferings, admiration for its achievements, and faith in its future. In this respect his leanings would seem to be towards Positivism, were it not that his love of liberty as such, and an evident propensity towards destruction for its own sake, would incur the severest censures of Auguste Comte and his more faithful followers. Again, the prominence given in his polemic poetry to the wrongs of the poor, and the representation of them as due to artificial arrangements for which the wickedness of priests and kings rather than impersonal economic conditions is made responsible, go to rank him with the socialists of the Paris Commune, whom Mazzini held in abhorrence. In the early days of the French Revolution such an attitude had not been unusual among its champions, who looked on the extinction of poverty and the equalisation of fortunes as necessary consequences of representative government, a free press, and universal education. Their hopes have not been justified, so far, by American examples; and some renovated form of Catholic feudalism has, under various names, been put in competition, through the whole nineteenth century, with that irresponsible plutocracy which to some seems the real outcome of revolutionary agitation.

But whatever may be the incoherencies of Mr. Swinburne's political partisanship, and however belated his attitude in

respect to the social problems of modern Europe, the value of his rhymed rhetoric as an exponent of advanced public opinion on certain lines remains unaltered. His defiance of English prudery in 'Poems and Ballads' had excited a storm of obloquy; his bolder defiance of religious cant in 'Songs Before Sunrise' neither injured his popularity, nor, so far as I know, did it draw down on him the reprehension of any serious critic.

There is no need to quote the vehement phrases in which Mr. Swinburne has chosen to express his hatred and contempt for the idea of a personal God, distinct from the world and from the human soul. They lack the dignity of Matthew Arnold's sorrowful renunciation, nor do they display the martyr-courage of Shelley's Queen Mab; Clough's 'Easter Day,' and 'The Shadow,' are more sublime; and the last line of Browning's 'Fears and Scruples' comes with a more thrilling shock of surprise.

It is pleasanter to dwell on the poet's one expression of enthusiastic veneration for the Founder of Christianity. Among 'the names that exalt and transmute us' he reckons 'the snow-bright splendour of Christ.' Here we find him in agreement with the Wordsworth of the revolutionary period, as well as with the Shelley of 'Prometheus Unbound,' 'Hellas,' and the 'Essay on Christianity,' whose philosophy he has inherited together with their political ideals. If Christ were one with God, argues Mr. Swinburne, he would not allow priests and tyrants to pervert his religion into an instrument of falsehood and oppression. By parity of reasoning there is no personal God of any kind; all the beings who ever went by that name are creations of human thought. Wordsworth's 'Recluse' presents almost exactly the same theory of religious origins couched in more moderate language. As he subsequently came to exchange his revolutionary pantheism for High Church Toryism, it might be suspected that the theology of poets depended chiefly on their political opinions. There certainly seems to be a close connexion between the two classes of conviction, nor are the poets alone in exemplifying it. But religious belief must have been seriously shaken before it can become the sport of circumstances, its connexion with which is, after all, little more than accidental. And I think it will be found that with Mr. Swinburne, as with Shelley, Hellenism was

the real source of religious unbelief, or rather what led to the substitution of man for God as the object of their religious faith. The same Greek spirit animates the whole of Matthew Arnold's poetry; and in Browning's later years the study of the Attic drama is still more prominent than the denunciations of Christian eschatology.

Hellenism, on the other hand, had nothing to do with shaping the thoughts of the two other great poets whose fame as such dates from this period, Dante Rossetti and William Morris. Both possessed some strong elements of a religious nature, with little enough of what we call reasonableness as distinguished from intellect, for of that their endowment was immense. Rossetti was mystical and superstitious; Morris, brought up in an Evangelical family, at Marlborough and Oxford a pronounced Anglo-Catholic, and originally destined for holy orders, was moreover affectionate, remarkable for moral delicacy, and animated with a passionate desire for the relief of human suffering. Both were, besides, enthusiastic mediaevalists; while Morris, unlike some other romanticists, 'loathed all classical art and literature.'[1] We must therefore attribute it chiefly to the time-spirit that Rossetti was 'a decided sceptic; was never confirmed, professed no religious faith, and practised no regular religious observances.'[2] About Morris our information is less explicit; but judging from his printed works, faith in him seems to have been represented by the same 'frightful vacuum' that the Roman Catholic critic deplored in Mr. Swinburne. The 'Earthly Paradise' abounds in bitter lamentations over the certainty of death, with no outlook on any life beyond the grave; while for him who 'can discern no God,' nor aught of good, nor anything that his 'utmost woe can move,' in the world, the poet counsels neither faith nor hope in the unseen, but a tireless clinging to whatever has once been loved.[3] In his later socialistic period the despairing tone gives place to manlier strains; but what religion there is seems to be a simple worship of earth, which takes the place of Humanity

[1] Mackail's 'Life of William Morris,' Vol. II., p. 171.
[2] 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Letters and Memoir,' Vol. I., p. 114.
[3] 'Prologue to December.'

in Swinburne's songs—a creed well summed up in the tender lines:

> 'Thy soul and life shall perish,
> And thy name as last night's wind;
> But earth the deed shall cherish
> That thou to-day shalt find.'[1]

How the change from High Church principles to this attitude of stoical resignation came about in Morris's life we cannot as yet tell. His official biographer throws no light on the subject, and seems rather studiously to avoid it. Perhaps the process took place unconsciously, or, if abruptly, as the result of an unconscious transformation in the young student's ideals. An observation let fall by another artist, who was also a distinguished art-critic and writer, may give us some help. Philip Gilbert Hamerton complains in his 'Autobiography' that R. W. Mackay, the author of the 'Progress of the Intellect,' whose intimate friend he was for a time, threw away his life on what seemed to the young painter a useless task—'the study of theology on the negative side.' 'His idea,' Hamerton tells us, 'was that the liberation of thought could only be accomplished by going painfully over the whole theological ground and *explaining* every belief and phase of belief historically and rationally. My opinion was, and is, that all this trouble is superfluous. The true liberation must come from the enlargement of mind by wider and more accurate views of the natural universe. As this takes place the mediaeval beliefs must drop away of themselves, and we now see that this process is actually in operation. So far from devoting a life to the refutation of theological error, I would not bestow on such an unnecessary and thankless task the labour of a week or a day.'[2]

We certainly need not regret that Hamerton devoted no part of his own life to such a pursuit; and we may well regret that Mackay's industry and scholarship were not employed to better purpose. But the latter's ill-success must be attributed to a dull style and a radical incapacity for original research rather than to an inherent fault of method. 'Wider and more accurate views of the universe' are no doubt very desirable in

[1] 'Poems by the Way,' p. 131.
[2] 'Philip Gilbert Hamerton: Autobiography and Memoir,' p. 146.

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themselves, and when acquired are potent agents in displacing those 'mediaeval beliefs' with which they cannot ultimately coexist. But the real question is how, to begin with, they are to be got into men's minds when encountered at their first approach by the violent opposition of theological prepossessions. And even when admitted, there is some danger of their being vitiated by the society of views with which they are logically rather than psychologically incompatible. One hardly sees how the work of clearance and purification can be effected without the help of that detailed criticism so contemptuously set aside by the literary artist. Personally he did not need it; but this was because the work had been done for him by others. Their slow sapping had cleared away the obstructions in whose presence the scientific and aesthetic view of nature might have failed to impress him, as it failed to impress Sir Humphry Davy and Faraday, Haydon and Walter Pater, with a sense of something quite alien from the current mythology.

We may suppose, then, that William Morris, like Hamerton, without himself coming in contact with any form of rationalistic criticism, so far profited by the atmosphere which it had generated that the mere appreciation of beautiful art and literature at once rid his mind of the phantoms which so long retained their hold on Ruskin. What makes his position, and in a less degree Rossetti's, so significant is that with them romanticism has become completely dissociated from the mediaeval faith which in the previous generation had so often accompanied it as to seem a necessary condition of its perfect efflorescence. Rossetti uses the figures of Catholic mythology with the same appreciation of their beauty and the same disbelief in their reality that the poets, painters, and sculptors of later Greek art exhibited in dealing with the traditional divinities of Olympus. Morris discarded that mythology altogether; going to the Middle Ages only for their developments of elemental human passion, their inexhaustible suggestions of structural and decorative beauty, but above all for their free individualism, where the Tractarian movement had sought only for examples of hieratic or feudal control. It was indeed a memorable triumph for rationalism, so often despised as a process of sterile negation, that by dissolving away the dead theological accretions of romanticism it should

have reindowed English literature with this wonderful treasure of imaginative power and joy.

Edward Fitzgerald belonged, properly speaking, to no school, but being most nearly related to the modern romanticists, he may fitly find a place in their company. Moreover, the various fortunes of that unique translation which has placed him in the very highest rank of Victorian literature may be quoted as evidence of the revolution in religious opinion which it is the object of this chapter to exhibit. Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam first appeared in 1859, but found so little sale that the copies had to be sold off at a penny a piece. It cannot be said that people had no taste for original poetry in the fifties. On the contrary, they were hungering for it to such a degree that clever imitations of the genuine article, from Alexander Smith to Owen Meredith, were eagerly devoured; while, thanks to the same demand, Shelley and Keats were emerging from their long obscurity. A more probable explanation of their indifference to the Rubaiyat is that, like Arnold's 'Empedocles,' it was in advance of the age, or rather was submerged by its still surviving religious prejudices, rising to the surface when those prejudices had been, at least in part, dispelled.

I have coupled the name of Omar with that of Empedocles. But there is this difference between them that the Sicilian philosopher-poet held no such views as those of which Arnold has chosen to make him the mouthpiece. He was neither a pantheist nor a pessimist, but a rather optimistic believer in reincarnation. Omar, on the contrary, was both. Without being Persian scholars, we may take this on the evidence of the literal translations by which public curiosity has recently been gratified. At the same time they enable us to understand how much Fitzgerald has added, not only in the way of poetic beauty, but also in the way of philosophic thought, to his original. He does not make its mystic meaning more distinct when he tells us of a secret Presence taking all shapes and alone remaining while they pass and perish, of a drama contrived by One who is himself what he enacts. But he dwells with a bitterness much more intense than Omar's on the evanescence of the personality in which the Absolute temporarily manifests itself, and even

adds an injunction quite alien from the Oriental genius to 'blind the Me in Thee,' that is to quench the higher consciousness by which God reveals himself as one with ourselves.

Something, in fact, of the same defiant mood that marks 'Songs before Sunrise' has made its way into Fitzgerald's additions to the quatrains on which he worked. The lines—

> 'Nay, but for terror of his wrathful Face
> I swear I will not call Injustice Grace,'

inserted in the edition of 1868, are entirely of his own composition, and seem directly inspired by the famous passage in the 'Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy,' published three years earlier, where Mill declares that he will not call the God preached by Mansel good; 'and if he sends me to hell for saying it, to hell I will go.'

Again, where Omar humbly pleads the impotence of man as contrasted with the omnipotence and omniscience of his creator, in discharge of all responsibility for sin, Fitzgerald with a more audacious moral indignation exclaims:

> 'What! from this helpless Creature be repaid
> Pure Gold for what he lent us dross-allayed—
> Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
> And cannot answer—oh, the sorry trade!'

And again in more peremptory tones:

> 'Oh Thou who Man of baser Earth didst make,
> And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
> For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
> Is blacken'd—Man's Forgiveness give—and take!'

All attempts to trace the second of these quatrains to an Oriental source have failed; and the reciprocity implied in the last line is characteristically English. There seems no doubt that Fitzgerald rejected the popular Christian mythology from beginning to end: and the clear expression of this rejection in his wonderful poem, while it explains the first failure of 'Omar Khayyam,' explains also its final success, beginning with the second edition in 1868.

When that success became assured, religious believers found some satisfaction in dwelling on the unbridled sensuality of the poem, with its implied moral, 'let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,' as a fearful warning against the consequences of

infidelity. The argument involves a vicious—or in this instance what may be called a virtuous—circle; for unless the necessity of controlling the sensual appetites can be made evident on other than theological grounds, one fails to see how the theological unbeliever can be expected to recognise it. But if there are such grounds—as all men implicitly admit—then there is an independent morality; and from the ethical point of view theology becomes superfluous, whatever other good reasons there may be for accepting it.

It may be gathered from this and the last chapter that by the end of the sixties a greatly preponderating weight of English intellect, representing every variety of talent, training, and circumstance, was cast against the religious revival, and was moving with more or less decision on the lines of rationalistic thought. A current way of expressing the revolution thus effected would be to say that enlightened intelligence was losing its hold on dogma. If by dogma be meant any definite religious belief, such an admission would practically involve what is here asserted; for, according to the definition adopted in this work, the decay of religious belief is just what rationalism brings about, by the direct action of reason on thinking minds, but rather by authority and imitation on those whom they lead—two forces most potent with the men who make laws and who write songs for a nation. But I need hardly say that many who profess to repudiate or to depreciate dogma would be very sorry to identify it in this uncompromising way with religious belief. Clear issues of any kind annoy them, and most of all such issues as compel them to take sides on the fundamental questions of existence, or even to admit that anything is fundamental, that anything must either be or not be, that anything in the last resort really is or is not. They have just logic enough to know that logic is intolerant of such loose thinking; and so if there is anything they have the energy to hate, it is logic.

Nothing can escape law, not even the enemies of law; and these gelatinous products of a transitional epoch have their evidentiary value as a symptom of movement and conflict. They have their place in the stream; they are definitely related to its various directions; and with their best efforts they cannot

help taking sides with one or other of its opposing currents. Undenominationalism, as we are often enough reminded, is itself a denomination. To the leaders and marking personalities of the religious revival, Wilberforce, Coleridge, Newman, Keble, Gladstone, Maurice, Martineau, dogma was a very precious thing; and the lazy scepticism which forbears to examine its claims on our belief seemed not by any means admirable to them. When rationalism denied their dogmas, they were ready to cross swords with it on its own ground; for the nation to lose its hold on dogma would mean for them that it had ceased to be religious. True rationalists, on the other hand, object to dogmas not because they are definite, but because they are untrue; nor would they be content to accept a vague religiosity as a satisfactory substitute for the theology they condemn. From this point of view the tolerant undenominational attitude is not the natural successor of religious dogmatism, but a compromise between dogmatism and critical reason. That it should prevail to any considerable extent shows that the aggressive irreligion which so annoys its benevolence has been gaining ground. And under the sting of that annoyance its attitude of aloofness may easily be exchanged for an attitude of passionate hostility.

Still more will this be the case if its professors should retain as a residual belief certain articles which they do not as a rule present under the name of dogmas, but which are in truth not less dogmatic than the confession of Augsburg or the Vatican Decrees. On the average their creed embraces three points—God, freedom, and immortality, but it may be abbreviated or extended at the discretion of the individual believer. More or fewer, its articles are always upheld as the essence of religion, the only thing, or things, that really concern us, the true Catholic faith by which nations and individuals are to be saved. Catholics of a more complicated creed are sometimes so rude as to call it infidelity; but in moments of danger they will gladly use its champions as allies against the common enemy.

Such in general outline was the position occupied by the most popular English poet of the Victorian period; and the fact of his occupying it may have contributed somewhat to his popularity. I have kept what there is for me to say about Tennyson for the last place in this review, because the singular

immobility and bareness of his outlook on life—or whatever name best fits what certain critics are pleased to call his philosophy—deprive it of all illustrative value for any particular stage of thought, while leaving it a general significance for the sixty years over which his literary activity extended; and because it might seem disrespectful to pass over one who is sometimes reckoned among the great teachers of the age, without giving some reason for dissent from that exalted estimate of his services.

To call Tennyson a philosopher argues a very loose employment of that much abused term. His views about things in general were neither original, nor connected, nor complete. He had a certain knack of coining the conventional morality into felicitously worded aphorisms—a power which no considerable poet is without, but which falls considerably short of philosophy. Being also endowed with a good share of intellectual curiosity, a retentive memory, and much leisure, he accumulated a respectable amount of miscellaneous information, and used it very effectively as a decoration for his poetry. His language presents a rare combination of freshness with finish; his observation of nature is both wide and accurate, his wealth of illustration inexhaustible, his feeling strong and dignified. Taken together with the indefinable quality known as poetic inspiration, these gifts constitute Tennyson's characteristic endowment, and suffice to give him a high rank among the poets of the century, but a rank lower than that of Keats, Shelley, and Wordsworth. Even as a poet he lacks grasp and depth; he flies neither high nor far. In epic poetry he is not at his best; in drama he is at his worst; his lyrics, though admirable, are not of the first order; it proves his limitations that he should succeed best in elegy and description. But in the purely descriptive passages also these limitations stand revealed. Tennyson's art consists of brief characteristic touches, bringing out in brilliant light one side, or rather one angle of the thing depicted. No one has ever been, as painters say, such a master of his means, for the very limitation becomes a glory: the vision is great because it is so small, giving an impression of pregnancy, of reserved power, where the seeming inhibition perhaps means impatience or exhaustion. His mind shows the

linear spectrum of a gaseous nebula, not the banded spectrum of a solid star. Nowhere, I believe, does the word 'all' occur so frequently as in his poems; but it expresses mere abstract totality, the impatience for ending to which I have referred.

In morality Tennyson is a conventionalist, who accepts the standards of his own age, country, and social environment as the expression of an eternal law, revealed to himself or any one else who will only listen, by the discernment of an infallible intuition. In his youth this was a rather liberal point of view, being at any rate opposed to the notion, held equally by Evangelicals and Tractarians, of human nature as radically untrustworthy and corrupt. Personal experience led him to wage war against mercenary marriages: when he had made his fortune and grown old the poet betrayed a decided inclination to associate moral excellence with the possession of inherited wealth. Without being a prig himself, no writer has furnished priggism with a larger repertory of quotations; nor will romanticists easily forgive him for turning one of their heroes into the incarnation of its spirit and the evangelist of its Gospel.

In politics the late Laureate was a Whig, in whom the old Miltonian republicanism had been definitely exchanged for a new Cavalier loyalism, the sincerity of which was never tested by a rupture between the sovereign and the people, nor troubled by having the incompatibility of court-influence with administrative efficiency forced on its attention.

Reverie even when 'enchanted' is not thought; nor is a fortuitous concourse of opinions a philosophy. Tennyson's metaphysics and theology—if such pompous names can be given to such waifs and strays of a wrecked Catholicism as the last surges of the distant revolutionary ocean cast up on his mental moorings—were, like his morals and his politics, a product of accidental circumstances adjusted by conflicting forces. Here his attitude may best be described as tepid liberalism varied by occasional fits of reactionary passion. Lord Chesterfield tells us that Pope was 'a Deist believing in a future state;'[1] and no doubt, had the opportunity been possible, he would have applied the same curt summary to the later poet's creed. Nor indeed

[1] 'Lord Chesterfield's Letters with the Characters,' Vol. III., p. 1410 (Character of Mr. Pope).

would that shrewd observer have been so far out as might at first sight appear. 'Akbar's Dream' would have delighted the author of the 'Universal Prayer,' and the whole eighteenth century along with him. Tennyson believed that Christianity represented the spirit of comprehensive toleration more perfectly than any other concrete religion. He may have failed to observe that the Evangelist who has given Christian love its most beautiful expression is also distinguished by his fierce intolerance of Jews and heretics, the message of affection being reserved for orthodox believers and their prospective converts.

'Akbar' contains a veiled but sufficiently transparent expression of its author's disbelief in miracles. This seems a rather singular indiscretion in one who censured James Martineau's 'Seat of Authority in Religion' on the ground that it published to all the world things which should be reserved for a select few.[1] By an inconsistency which would be curious were it not so common, Tennyson seemed to think that while theism and immortality were the most certain of all doctrines, they stood in danger of being rejected by the generality unless enclosed in various frameworks of dogma and ritual, without value for himself and other educated men, darkening the truths they are supposed to embody, and breeding violent dissensions between their respective adherents. To make matters worse, the intuitions of morality stand or fall with that faith in God and a future life which in its turn depends, among other conditions, on pretending to believe or dissembling one's disbelief in miracles which 'not I nor he nor any' can work.

Surely a great teacher of the age should bring it some sincerer, more coherent message than this!

Assuming that religion has two aspects, an esoteric and an exoteric, a secluded dreamer may be excused for his clumsy handling of it on the exoteric side. Let us see, then, what the philosophic poet has to tell us about the inner mysteries. His nearest approach to a complete deliverance on the subject is to be found in a well-known piece called 'The Higher Pantheism.' It takes the form of a monologue addressed to his own soul. All material phenomena, from the stars to the human body, are, we learn,—not exactly God himself but—a vision of God who is 'all but thou that hast power to feel "I am I."'

[1] 'Life of Tennyson,' Vol. II., p. 172.

Before proceeding any further one must observe that whatever may be the merits of this creed, it is not pantheism in any sense, higher or lower, but merely a peculiar form of monotheism. A God who leaves any single personality outside himself is not the whole but only a part—as large as you like, but still no more than a part of the whole. How large a part remains undecided, owing to Tennyson's characteristically nebulous use of the word 'all.' Presumably other souls besides our poet's have the 'power to feel "I am I."' There is said to be such a philosophy as solipsism; but no one, so far, has limited existence to himself and God. The 'Higher Pantheism' itself refers to 'the fool' who says there is 'no God at all,' and therefore can hardly form part of him; although the higher mysticism might go to the length of implying as much. Yet the words 'for is He not all but thou?' logically involve the inclusion of every human being except Tennyson in the Divine Personality. I say nothing of the lower animals, from the dog to the flea. They may conceivably belong to 'the vision of Him who reigns.' But evolutionists, of whom Tennyson professed to be one, must admit that, historically at least, no hard-and-fast line can be drawn between the highest animal intelligence and the most rudimentary form of self-conscious reason. Nor again is it possible to part off the whole of individualised life as a sort of revolt and separation from God; for an evolutionist holds that there is not an impassable chasm between the organic and the inorganic any more than between man and brute.

The principle referred to suggests a key to the whole puzzle. When Tennyson wrote, the doctrine of evolution had put God as the Great First Cause, or the Creator of heaven and earth, out of sight. At the same time a revived interest in philosophy, largely determined by Sir W. Hamilton's 'Lectures on Metaphysics,' had taken the direction of discussing theories about noumena and phenomena, things in themselves, and things as they appear to our senses. People asked what was the substance underlying sensible accidents, the reality behind appearances. Long before this the great Hindoo sages had said that it was God; and Kant's German successors were understood to say the same in more uncouth language. But the clergy, backed by some learned ladies, condemned this theory as certainly

unorthodox and probably immoral—flat pantheism in short, as young Sterling said to Carlyle a generation before. It was also unpopular at the universities, being understood to threaten life-fellowships with extinction.[1]

Now, what Tennyson calls the Higher Pantheism is an endeavour to turn God from a First Cause into an ultimate substance of things, while preserving human personality and moral responsibility intact. But pantheism, whether Hindoo or German, had always treated the modifications of our inner consciousness, feelings, thoughts, and wishes, as no less phenomenal than the sensible appearances we call matter; and God, conceived as substance, is just as much the reality of the one as of the other. For this reason it cannot, as I have said, leave human personality as a thing in itself, existing by the side of God. Mysticism also holds to the All-One, not to a big One plus a little one.

Tennyson passes for a mystic; but he always trembled at the brink of the abyss, and shrank back into a half-hearted dualism, which he cannot present with any approach to logical coherence. Lessing wrote a dissertation to prove that Pope was no metaphysician. But the author of the 'Essay on Man' seems a strong systematic thinker when compared with the singer of 'The Higher Pantheism.'

It is recorded that Gladstone at the end of a discussion on immortality with Froude, Tyndall, and Tennyson, advised 'the scientific men to stick to their science, and leave philosophy and religion to the poets, philosophers, and theologians.' From his own point of view the result would have been disastrous had the experiment been tried when the words were uttered, for the weight of authority would have been thrown against the dogmatic system in which he delighted. At best this new sort of Oecumenical Council would have broken up in hopeless disagreement. And the discordance of the poets among themselves would have been reflected in the equally hopeless confusion of his own favourite poet's theological ideas.

This is no new experience. When Socrates cross-examined the Athenian poets he found that they knew no more than he

[1] See Mansel's 'Phrontisterion,' where the two ideas are intimately associated.

or any one else did about the great problems of existence, although 'on the strength of their poetry they believed themselves to be the wisest of men in other things in which they were not wise.'[1] They, if any, should stick to the subjects with which nature had fitted them to deal, with simple, sensuous, and passionate things, with the material aspects of the universe and the elementary emotions of humanity, not with the truth or error of beliefs, but with their aesthetic side, with the feelings accompanying the acceptance or the denial of religion in all its forms, giving voice with equally splendid sincerity to the despair of the Calvinist in Cowper's 'Castaway,' and to the rapture of the evolutionary iconoclast in Swinburne's 'Hymn of Man.'

Meanwhile we who are concerned not with the picturesque and passionate side, but with the inward coherence of beliefs, must turn once more to those who, putting their trust in reasoning rather than in alleged intuitions, have tried to organise the most valid convictions of their age into a consistent body of doctrine, either by adjusting old standards to new, or by working out the most advanced views to their extreme logical conclusions.

[1] 'Apologia,' p. 22 (Jowett's translation).

CHAPTER XVII

RECONSTRUCTION AND REACTION

TOWARDS the close of the sixties advanced public opinion in England began to interest itself once more in theology. The tone of contemptuous indifference, so general a few years earlier, could not in any case have been much longer maintained. Religious beliefs irreconcilable with the new science and the new criticism were still held by the clergy, implied by the forms of public worship, and accepted as unshaken truths by vast numbers of the people. What Herbert Spencer called religion, what Lecky called Christianity, was the negation of all this; what Seeley pointed to as Christ's real work, amounted to a scheme of social reform in which the supernatural had no place. Such compromises were merely concessions on matters of form, involving a more or less open assumption that the substantial victory of naturalism could no longer be disputed. Among others the most vigorous controversialist of the age, Fitzjames Stephen, spared no pains to set forth the actual state of the religious question in the clearest terms.[1] On the other hand, the spread of ritualism proved that the clergy, so far from accepting the results of modern thought, were bent on carrying out the sacerdotal movement which confronted and contradicted them at every point.

As it happened, two events of the highest importance came to precipitate a crisis which in the nature of things could not have been much longer delayed. The same year, 1869, that saw the end of the Irish Church Establishment, saw the opening of the Vatican Council, avowedly assembled for the purpose of decreeing Papal Infallibility. How the Pope's claims bore on the progress of English rationalism is a point which must be

[1] Review of 'Ecce Homo' in 'Fraser's Magazine,' June and July, 1866.

reserved for a later section of this chapter. For the present we have only to consider what consequences flowed from the ecclesiastical revolution in Ireland.

In the last chapter I attempted to show—with what success the reader must judge for himself—that Irish disestablishment, together with the other great liberal measures of Gladstone's first government, was only made possible by the spread of rationalistic ideas in English society. But the electoral and Parliamentary success of the Irish Bill was primarily due to the English Dissenters, and its immediate effect was to exalt their self-confidence enormously, and to raise an expectation, entertained by many besides themselves, that the fall of their detested enemy, the Church of England, was not far off. This impression was still further strengthened by the spread of ritualism, and by the impatience of many ritualists at the interference of the State with questions of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. It was thought that clerical liberty would be cheaply purchased even by the surrender of Church property.

At this juncture an unexpected and rather compromising ally came forward in defence of the Establishment—no other, indeed, than Matthew Arnold. That the author of 'Empedocles on Etna' and 'Obermann Once More' should assume this character may serve to illustrate that strange complexity, miscalled eccentricity, of the Anglo-Saxon genius, of which America was soon afterwards to supply another instance, when the veteran anti-slavery journalist, Horace Greely, presented himself as the Democratic candidate for the Presidency of the United States in opposition to General Grant. In his capacity of school-inspector Arnold had seen a good deal of the Dissenters, and had not been favourably impressed by his experience of their intellectual and social standards. Their ideas were very limited, and their manners were very bad. In his opinion the first step towards redeeming them from this degraded position must be their return to the Anglican fold, which they ought never to have left. Following the lines of his father's policy, he was prepared, without any authorisation from either party, to permit their readmission on very easy terms; and as a preparation for this great work the accomplished essayist set himself to prove that in separating themselves from the Church the Nonconformists had been the victims of an unfortunate

misunderstanding. Two articles in the 'Cornhill Magazine,' subsequently reprinted as a small volume under the title of 'St. Paul and Protestantism,' were written for the purpose of dispelling it.

According to Arnold, the deluded sectaries whom he calls Protestants, whether Evangelicals or Dissenters, and whether followers of Luther or of Calvin, while professedly basing their belief on the authority of St. Paul, have hopelessly mistaken the meaning of the great Apostle's teaching. Original sin and justification through Christ's atoning blood, with or without the doctrine of predestination, are dogmas partly not to be found in St. Paul's Epistles, partly mere accommodations to the current notions of his age. He admits indeed, what could hardly with decency be denied, that the theology both of the Anglican and the Roman Churches embraces a good deal of the objectionable errors for which the unfortunate Dissenters, or the Protestants generally, are made peculiarly responsible. But he contends that less prominence is given to them in Catholicism; that the Catholic Churches contain a principle of development not possessed by sects taking their stand on texts of Scripture—falsely interpreted into the bargain; that the Puritan separation on questions of belief, whether based on a true or a false interpretation of Scripture, was really a revolt against the liberty of opinion conceded by the formularies of the Establishment.

There is, no doubt, much good sense and sound reasoning in all this—sense and reasoning which are apt to count at more than their full value when aided by the persuasive lucidity of Arnold's style. But notwithstanding the free use of historical illustrations, there is a lack of historical insight no less than a deficient grasp of contemporary realities in his Essay. From the exclusively controversial character of the whole discussion not enough account, if indeed any account, is taken of the peculiar circumstances by which St. Paul's theology was determined, the moral element is disproportionately insisted on, and his ethical terms are taken too much at their modern valuation; while, contrariwise, the moral side of Dissent is too much ignored.

Again, while not claiming any particular originality for his reinterpretation of the Pauline theology, and candidly referring to Ed. Reuss as an admirable guide on the subject, Arnold

seems unjustly to put out of sight what English Unitarian divines have done in the same line. Unitarians were, I believe, among the first to appreciate his essay, as well they might, considering how admirably it harmonised with their own religious ideas, on the Scriptural side. But the English Unitarians are descended from the Puritan Nonconformists whom Arnold condemns so severely for their intolerance as compared with the Church that cast them out. Thus development would seem to have been more rapid without than within the pale of the Establishment, what development there has been within owing its origin largely to communications from without. Nor, if we go back to the seventeenth century, is there any warrant for assuming that the advantage in liberality was all on the side of the High Church as against the Puritans. Cromwell and Milton were surely more large-mined than Charles I. and Laud. Cudworth was, if you will, no Puritan in his theology; but a Puritan House of Commons listened patiently to what they called 'a painstaking and heart-searching sermon,' preached by him on March 31, 1647, voting him, moreover, the sum of twenty pounds in acknowledgment of its excellence. It is indeed one of the noblest sermons in the language; but what deserves particular notice is the emphasis laid by the preacher on practical righteousness, and the rather disdainful tone, quite remarkable for that period, with which forensic theology is treated throughout.

With all his passion for reunion, Arnold has to admit that the prospects of reconciliation with Rome are as yet very distant, though not quite hopeless. Nevertheless, his friendliness towards Roman Catholicism contrasts markedly with his rather supercilious treatment of Dissent. If he justifies the Reformation it is entirely on moral grounds: communion with a Church corrupt enough to sell indulgences could not, he tells us, be maintained. In point of fact England did not separate from Rome on moral, but on political grounds; and however much may be made of dogmatic differences in ages of theological controversy, political reasons are also chiefly responsible for the vitality of Dissent. Intellectual motives also, reason, the right of private judgment, free enquiry—things traditionally associated with Protestantism—are strangely ignored by one who, of all critics, should have been the last to forget them.

St. Paul, with his Hellenistic training, represented them also as against Jewish ceremonialism. To deny his Protestant character just at a time when the priestly, sacramental, magical side of religion was being aggressively reasserted seemed, to say the least of it, inopportune.

That a son of Dr. Arnold and a friend of Dean Stanley should employ his delightful literary gift in defence of Broad Church principles was natural and becoming, however eccentric might seem the introduction of a polemic against Dissent into a controversy dealing with far higher theological issues. The great enemy of separatism was perhaps not free from certain separatist tendencies of his own, leading him to occupy a place apart from the ruck of liberals. But what gave Matthew Arnold's attitude a rather ludicrous aspect was his own complete and unconcealed dissent from the religious beliefs of his religious countrymen, Conformist or otherwise. His celebrated definition of a personal God as 'a magnified non-natural man in the next street'[1] first occurs in this essay. So also does the ambitious piece of tautology by which he proposes to replace that notion, 'the stream of tendency (or, the universal order) by which all things strive to fulfil the law of their being.'[2] And here also the Christian doctrine of a resurrection to immortality is reinterpreted—on St. Paul's authority too—as 'obedience to righteousness,'[3] or to 'the eternal moral order.'[4] That Paul believed in a physical resurrection is not denied, but the importance he attached to it is unduly minimised. However, what the Apostle did or did not think is, in this connexion, of little more than biographical interest, and need not delay us here. The odd thing was to suppose that when the whole dogmatic edifice came down, Dissent alone would be crushed under its ruins. All religious organisations have a remarkable power of adapting themselves to changed conditions of knowledge; but so far the larger bodies seem to show it in a less degree than the smaller. Renan, who on these questions was a less prejudiced judge than our countryman, thought that the religion of the future lay with communities organised on a Congregationalist basis.

[1] 'St. Paul and Protestantism,' p. 99.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 12.
[3] P. 84. Cf. p. 90.
[4] P. 92.

In fact it was from his own side—or at least what he chose to regard as such—that the strongest opposition to Arnold's interpretation of theology proceeded; and rationalists have reason to be grateful both to his unwilling clients and to himself for bringing the ultimate points at issue into court. His next work, 'Literature and Dogma,' which also first appeared in the 'Cornhill Magazine,' has for its object to elucidate and justify that definition of God which most persons understood as a confession of atheism;—to show also, what was more difficult, that an impersonal 'stream of tendency' could be so interpreted as to cover the religious teaching of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. I propose to analyse the curious combination of ideas by which the author of 'Empedocles' was led into undertaking this singular reconstruction of theistic belief.

I have characterised that celebrated phrase, 'the stream of tendency by which all things strive to fulfil the law of their being,' as tautological. And in fact 'tendency,' 'striving,' 'fulfilment,' 'law,' and 'being,' are, from the highest point of view, all synonymous with streaming. We have known since Heracleitus that things are always changing; we know also that, within the limits of our experience, the changes are marked by a certain constancy. Things do not vary to infinity, but fall into certain groups of units connected by various degrees of resemblance; and as a consequence of this resemblance, their movements also do not involve an infinite and incalculable succession of changes. The same events recur, in different combinations it is true, but combinations themselves determined by fixed conditions and admitting of accurate prediction. For purposes of study we detach these general relations, these uniformities, from the things connected by them, calling them laws or tendencies; but we do this with the clear consciousness that the detachment has no more than an ideal value, that neither do the things themselves exist in abstraction from their laws, nor the laws in abstraction from the things. And if this be admitted, we must also admit that the laws have not been imposed on the things which, for convenience, are said to obey them. Nor, again, need this conformity to law be enforced or aided by any external agency, as if there were any

difficulty about it, or any reluctance on the thing's part so to behave.

At the same time we have to bear in mind that the universe of things means an enormous and highly complicated structure, where all the elements are probably acting on one another, and many elements are certainly unknown to us. Accordingly when we enunciate the law of any one element we do so with the understood condition that no disturbing force intervenes. And this reservation is sometimes expressed by calling the law of its action or being a tendency, not meaning that the laws of nature are imperfectly fulfilled, but that our knowledge of natural happenings is imperfect. That is to say, something as yet hidden from us may intervene to prevent the complete realisation of what we expected, and what would actually have come about had only the things we know of been concerned. After all, the laws of their being have been perfectly fulfilled, but part of the power which those laws measure has been spent in neutralising power put forth in an opposite direction. Anyhow, speaking from a limited or interested point of view, the individual is checked and hampered at every turn by external agencies, not enabled to fulfil the law of its being.

All this seems obvious enough, and would need no recalling, but for Matthew Arnold's failure to recognise it, or at least his failure to see how ruinous must be its recognition to his attempted reconstruction of religious beliefs. What misled him, as it has misled many others, was the confusion between law in the physical sense and law in the ethical sense, between what is and what ought to be. There is every probability that philosophers were first led to reflect on and to formulate the uniformities of nature as laws by a sort of metaphor, by conceiving the universe after the fashion of a well-governed state, just as more primitive people conceived it after the fashion of a despotically governed kingdom. Nor, indeed, was their interpretation of nature's uniformities by the analogy of social regulations altogether metaphorical or fanciful; for primitive law is no arbitrary creation, but an abstracted custom, habitually and unquestioningly obeyed. But the Greek thinkers who first rose to the idea of natural law soon came to use it as a criticism on morals, contrasting the uniformity of nature with the apparent capriciousness of man, and recommending it as an example for

his imitation. A more perfect legislation was to remodel human codes into conformity with the eternal order of the physical world; and a more perfect education was to train citizens into willing compliance with its dictates. And since nothing seemed more natural than for men to seek their own happiness, this happiness must somehow be secured to each individual by obedience to the perfect law, described generally as following nature, described specifically as realising his own true nature, studying the happiness of his better self.

Such theories found an incomplete and one-sided expression in Aristotle's Ethics; incomplete, because the Athenian way of looking at life is too much identified with the ideally human view; one-sided, because even a normal Greek would not have given mere intellectual interests so large a place as they received from the studious recluse of the Lyceum. Then came the Stoics and corrected Aristotle's intellectualism by laying an exclusive stress on active virtue. They are chiefly known to us through Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

Dr. Arnold sent his son to Oxford rather than to Cambridge, chiefly that he might receive a sound Aristotelian training. As we know by 'Culture and Anarchy,' the young poet enjoyed this advantage, adding to it afterwards by his own choice an intimate acquaintance with Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. The clerical tutors of those times, believing as they did in Aristotle's infallibility, made it their business to harmonise his ethical teaching with Christianity, and especially to show that the great outstanding problem of the Ethics, how to make a pleasure of virtue, finds its solution in the Gospel; Matthew Arnold had, moreover, like other pupils of his father, received a lifelong bias from the religious revival of the twenties and thirties, which worked in the same direction.

Here, then, is the key to 'Literature and Dogma.' It is an attempt to show how the essence of Biblical religion may be preserved, even after the elimination of a personal God and a future life, by the application of Greek ethical methods to its contents. As might have been expected, both lines of thought, the Hebrew and the Hellenic, undergo considerable distortion in the process of being twisted together. We now see how that apparently unmeaning definition of God as 'the stream of tendency by which all things fulfil the law of their being,'

while on the face of it quite compatible with atheism or pantheism, was constructed to negotiate a return from the standpoint of 'Empedocles on Etna' to the objective theism of the Bible. A division between the thing and its law is insinuated; the word 'strive' suggests a certain inability on the thing's part to be itself, a demand for help from without, or an admission that such help has been received. Now let us substitute moral for physical law, and the separation becomes complete, the need for help notorious. There is a standard of right action and good feeling to which we do not live up, and even cannot live up so long as we are left to ourselves; while at the same time we are conscious that only by living up to it can our true nature be realised. And so on Arnold's interpretation of nature the obvious course is to look for help in the same eternal order that ensures the performance of their legitimate offices by the things of which morality is not predicated.

At this point Matthew Arnold substitutes for his original 'stream of tendency' the quite different idea of a 'Power not ourselves which makes for righteousness;' thus transforming, by a turn of the hand, something very like Spinoza's pantheism into something more like the ethical theism of Amos.

I have said 'quite different,' but I might have said absolutely contradictory. For this second idea, besides being abstracted from an incomparably more limited range of experience, also stands for something that is liable to be checked at every turn, whereas the general stream of tendency never fails. If there is a power making for righteousness, there are other powers not ourselves making for the contrary, temptations to evil, and obstacles to good conduct of every kind. These belong to the outer world quite as much as do the agencies contributing to virtue, whatever their relative values may be. Indeed, some moralists have talked as if all genuine motives to virtue came from our moral faculty acting conjointly with our freewill, and waging an incessant war with the instigations to evil from without.

On enquiry it turns out that what makes for righteousness is happiness, the traditional joy of duty fulfilled, the pleasure of a good conscience. We experience the pleasure, we attribute it to an external cause, and the reference produces a fresh

outburst of satisfaction. This sounds more Hellenic than Hebraic, and more rationalistic than religious. But now comes the astounding information that when Israel's sacred writers celebrated a God who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, they really meant no more than the hidden mechanism which makes good conduct the pleasantest course in the long run. It is not denied that they were anthropomorphic, that they personified a natural law; but we are assured that a good deal of agnosticism mixed itself up with their rapturous acknowledgments of the Eternal. A profane objector might pertinently observe that their hints at an unfathomable mystery were simply so many admissions of the rather obvious difficulties attending any interpretation of human life that identifies happiness with virtuous conduct. And such difficulties must have pressed above all on religious teachers who most distinctly were not Stoic moralists but Semitic theurgists, looking not to the ordinary course of nature but to a miraculous reversal of it as their ultimate security for the triumph of right over wrong.

Arnold appeals to the existence of religion as a witness to the eternal consciousness of a Power without us helping us to be good. But this view implies a strange misunderstanding of the historic relations between morality and religion. In his instance the misunderstanding arose from the Puritan associations which, in spite of vehement disclaimers, clung to him through life. They are traceable, above all, to the example of his father, who found, or thought he found, Christianity an indispensable means of moral training. Without doubt both Christianity and Judaism have been saturated with moral ideas at various stages of their evolution; and the same may be said of various other religions. Nevertheless, religion in its primitive phases seems to have no more connexion with morality than stones have with sermons, and it remains distinguishable from morality in every phase. What first interested the gods in morality seems to have been the habit of invoking them as witnesses to oaths: they avenged perjury more from a sense of outraged dignity than from any regard for abstract justice. At a later period moral codes, like everything else, were supposed to have a divine origin; and their author, or authors, were naturally expected to visit their violation with exemplary punishment. Such a belief would, of course, generate stories

of supernatural vengeance on sinners, or of supernatural favour to law-abiding citizens. Still the most remarkable providences seem to have been reserved for special cases of impiety on the one hand or devotion on the other, rather than for cases merely concerned with the relations of men among themselves. If this idea of gods who show such vindictiveness or such gratitude, where nothing but their own personal dignity is concerned, deserves to be called anthropomorphic and superstitious, so also does the idea of a divine sanction annexed to the performance of social duties. Such duties, no doubt, have their natural sanctions, or they never would be performed; but these are so far from suggesting the religious (or Arnoldian) interpretation of morality that religion, as a rule, is first called in when the motives to goodness derived from the pleasures and pains of conscience are found insufficient.

Arnold defines religion as morality touched with emotion; and he has collected a number of passages from the Bible in which the emotional colouring is vividly displayed. He might equally have defined it as science touched with emotion, or patriotism touched with emotion. The reason given for this preference of morality is its importance to ourselves. Conduct, he maintains, is three-fourths of life. Science and art are allowed to divide the remaining fourth between them, no special fraction being assigned to worldly prudence, which must therefore presumably count as a part of conduct. Vicious conduct, no doubt, is generally imprudent; but there are many forms of imprudence not usually described as vicious, sometimes even associated with courage or generosity, which make all the difference in the world to a man's happiness, but about which the religion of the Bible has nothing to say. Prudence touched by emotion is a rather difficult combination to realise; we habitually think of the two as indifferent, distrustful, or hostile to one another. On the other hand, the self-sacrificing virtues naturally ally themselves with enthusiastic states of feeling; for it needs, in most men, a great wave of excitement to submerge the ordinary restraints of self-interest or timidity. We have in the social instincts, from family affection up to the most exalted patriotism or love of humanity, a whole scale of motives adequate to this achievement. Much that passes under the name of religion may well be a symbolical

representation of these social instincts; but if so, to describe it as a power not ourselves is either vague or misleading. Surely there is something integral to our personality that constitutes the very process by which happiness has been annexed to virtue—in so far as their union has been really effected;—something about the sensibilities of the good man which would make any course other than the performance of his duty intolerably painful. And if so, the power making for righteousness must be, in the highest sense, ourselves.

Before the publication of 'Literature and Dogma' the Jewish dispensation generally passed for a system of theocratic government, conducted by means of supernatural sanctions involving a series of miraculous interpositions for the vindication of innocence and the redressal of wrongs. Arnold says that miracles do not happen; and he relegates the idea of a personal God to the limbo of unverifiable metaphysical speculations. Such a critic was bound to efface the most characteristic outlines of Hebrew religion. The endeavour to eliminate supernaturalism from New Testament Christianity involves an even freer handling of its sacred texts. The traditional view of the Christian revelation is that it relegates the just apportionment of happiness and misery to a future life, of whose existence we are certified by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That may be a narrow-minded and superstitious view; but it seems to represent the ideas set forth in the Parables much better than the Stoic thesis that altruism and self-devotion are the true secret of happiness. That is what we find in Seneca and Marcus Aurelius; we do not find it in the Synoptics nor even in the Johannine Gospel. The cry of despair from the cross, the cry of St. Paul that if Christ be not risen then we are of all men the most miserable, bar out the literary interpretation of dogma for ever. It is beautiful, it is magnificent, but it is not religion.

A school of German theologians, technically known as Rationalists, once existed, who managed to combine a general belief in the truth of the Gospel narratives with an absolute disbelief in the possibility of miracles. Accepting the reality of the incidents related by the Evangelists, those critics sought to explain them by the agency of purely natural causes. Thus the death of Jesus was described as merely apparent, and his

resurrection as a recovery from a swoon. Like all other more recent writers, Matthew Arnold very properly condemns this arbitrary and unsympathetic way of dealing with religious tradition.[1] Yet something of the same false rationalism seems to have vitiated his own interpretation of religious beliefs. According to him the psalmists, proverbialists, and apostles deceived themselves when they assumed the existence of an anthropomorphic deity, the creator of heaven and earth. But in proclaiming a constant association between happiness and virtue they observed and reported on the facts of experience with absolute accuracy. Just as, according to Paulus and his school, everything happened in the way the Gospels describe it, although not from the causes imagined by the Evangelists, so, if we are to believe 'Literature and Dogma,' the moral judgments of the Bible fulfil themselves naturally without the intervention of supernatural volitions.

There is undeniably some truth in the contention. By the constitution of nature pleasure is generally annexed to life-subserving actions; and morality, which subserves social life, not only contributes to the happiness of the community, but also to the happiness of every good citizen by reason of his goodness. Precisely the same may be said of the rationalistic explanation of miracles; it is true to some extent. Arnold himself admits, and few would now deny, that sundry cases of healing in the Gospels may well be historical facts. They were cures effected by what we call the magnetic influence of a commanding personality. It is a matter of experience that such cures still take place; and modern science admits them without losing its hold on natural law. For all that it might be rash to let the Bible enter as an important element into a course of therapeutics. It would promote superstition rather than verifiable science. So with morality. Much is made of its importance in the Bible, although the Biblical writers permit or even recommend a great deal that we now consider immoral. But the question is whether, even apart from such flaws, the enthusiasm they excite is not too dearly purchased by being associated with illusory expectations of happiness either here or hereafter.

Matthew Arnold was a rationalist not only, to some extent,

[1] 'Literature and Dogma,' p. 171.

in the limited German sense, but also, to the fullest extent, in the sweeping sense adopted throughout the present work. He would, no doubt, have repudiated the employment of reason, or of any other faculty, for the destruction of religious belief; nor, if we are to take his word for it, was destructive action of any kind much to his liking. Still, whether personally distasteful or not, there the action is, and it is exercised on everything that Cardinal Newman at least would have called religious belief, for that is precisely what our literary critic calls dogma. Against dogma, at any rate, no English writer has ever used the weapon of Voltaire, good sense and wit combined, with such irresistible effect. And I need hardly observe that he goes much further than Voltaire, deism being always singled out for especial contempt and ridicule by this modern defender of religion. Aversion from metaphysics has dispelled the youthful pantheism of his 'Empedocles'; and his oft-recurring phrase, 'the eternal not-ourselves,' effectually excludes it. But the charge of atheism, so freely brought by his assailants, one of whom particularly disliked hearing it brought against Comte, was inaccurate, and he earnestly repelled it. Agnosticism had not then come into fashion, and he never professed it; but it perhaps best describes his position. Science, he says, knows nothing about a personal first cause of the universe, nor yet about a future life; and he is content to remain as ignorant as science. More habitually, but to the same effect, he refers to such beliefs as 'unverifiable.' This he considers a conclusive answer to the stock arguments of natural theology. Yet, coming from him, the taunt seems singularly infelicitous. For what he assumes as a fact of experience, namely, that good conduct is rewarded with happiness, seems to supply the verification required. An examination of the external world, say the theists, suggests the idea that it was created by a conscious mind, a moral and intelligent person. And an examination of human life goes to prove that it is governed by just such principles as a good Being would put in force. By what arrangement could the conclusions of natural theology be more perfectly verified?

It does not appear what verification would have satisfied Arnold, but this verification, strange to say, he practically denies. His one all-sufficient answer to Unitarians and theists

is Butler's recriminatory argument.[1] If there are moral difficulties in Revelation—original sin, vicarious satisfaction, eternal punishment, and so forth—there are difficulties equally great in natural religion, in the theory that the world of experience was created by a just and beneficent deity. The world is, in fact, a scene of frightful injustice, where the innocent suffer for the guilty, and where penalties are out of all proportion to transgressions. Now, this emphatic endorsement of Butler's plea implies nothing less than the frank admission that life is a hell on earth. Otherwise the difficulties would not be, what they are alleged to be, as great for natural as for revealed religion. But, if so, what becomes of the Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness? What fatal magic lies in personification that it should reverse the signs of ethical values, and transform righteousness into the negation of itself?

Neo-Christians, who take 'Literature and Dogma' for their gospel, may perhaps contend that a pessimistic interpretation of nature cannot abolish the intrinsic happiness of virtue, the joy of self-renunciation. There is no objection to this sort of optimism; but the same line of apology is open to the followers of Francis Newman and James Martineau. Again the question returns, why should they be debarred from it by their personification of the not-ourselves? At any rate, they are not encumbered by the difficulty of getting up enthusiasm for an abstract tendency. And they can, with more propriety, borrow the devotional language of a book whose very first chapter describes the creation of the world by a personal Being who might, with not more flippancy, be called a 'magnified non-natural man in the next street,' than the deity of pseudo-scientific religion.

Matthew Arnold, as I have said, had no wish to destroy beliefs which, whether religious or not, seemed, at any rate, bound up with religion. By preference he would, like Schleiermacher, have taken the course of conceding to rationalism all it claimed, and then showing that the realities of faith remained untouched by the dissolving action of reason. English divines, however, were not willing to surrender their dogma at the bidding of literature; and English agnostics persisted in treating the poet of 'Empedocles' and 'Obermann' as one of themselves. Driven

[1] 'Literature and Dogma,' p. 328.

to define his position more clearly, Arnold could only do so by accentuating its negative side. His next book, 'God and the Bible: a review of the objections to Literature and Dogma,' is in part an attempt to prove some points that the earlier work had assumed as generally admitted by all except the English middle class. Among other things natural theology comes in for some unsparing criticism. Not for a century, that is not since Hume's Dialogues, had metaphysics been handled with such literary grace, nor since Plato's time with such cutting irony. As with Hume also, the appeal throughout is to experience, and the critic's attitude is, in the truest sense, agnostic. Neither the existence of a personal God nor a future life is denied outright. But it is contended that we have no evidence of either. It is quite conceivable that a divine personality, if such there were, might be revealed through the performance of miracles. And it would be rash to say that miracles are impossible, that the course of nature cannot be interrupted. But experience shows that such interruptions do not occur; and the tendency of advancing knowledge is more and more to discredit the narratives of their occurrence. Jesus himself did not profess to perform them, and resented the demand for them as a want of faith. What he meant by death and resurrection was self-renunciation followed by life in the eternal order. But his disciples failed to understand this lofty teaching in its entirety, and imagined miracles where none had been performed.

Metaphysical proofs of a Supreme Being who is also personal are a mere juggle with unmeaning words. As to the grand argument from design, it proves nothing. Of some structures, a watch or a honeycomb for example, we can say that they were made by man or by one of the lower animals, simply because we know by experience that they belong to a class of things so originating. But of other structures, such as the ear or a bud, not made by man or by one of the lower animals, we have no right to say that 'an infinite and all-powerful being made' them.[1] For of 'conscious intelligence, without bodily organisation' we have no experience.[2] And we refuse to affirm that God is a person who thinks and loves, because we have no experience of thinking and loving except as attached to a certain bodily organisation.[3]

[1] 'God and the Bible,' p. 102. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

Arnold's theological works first appeared in leading periodicals; they were widely circulated in book-form; and they have since been reprinted in popular editions. Whether the positive or the negative side of his teaching attracted more readers is not easy to determine. But that the negative side exercised great influence seems highly probable. Arguments so lucidly put, and reiterated over and over again with such inimitable address, must, one would think, have carried conviction to many hesitating minds. On the other hand, if his attempted rehabilitation deserves the criticisms addressed to it in the foregoing pages, rationalists at least would not let it unsettle their convictions. What is more, the religious element would serve to weight and drive in the wedges of disintegrating analysis. Arnold derived great personal authority from his literary position and his unquestionable scholarship; but the authority due to his professed care for religious interests counted in this instance for as much more. In repeating Hume's antitheistic arguments he had the air of one convinced against his will. In adopting as much of modern Biblical criticism as was needed to destroy the evidentiary value of the Biblical documents for supernatural occurrences, he indulged in so many sneers at the expense of the Germans and of their English followers, and contradicted their bolder inferences so sharply, that the really fatal amount he accepted was made to look like an irreducible minimum of concession. Scientific agnostics were supposed to come to the study of theology with a certain prejudice against its dogmas derived from their materialistic training, or from their anti-clerical associations. Their reasonings may have been unimpeachable, but their character was made to count as a deduction from it, when the balance of influence came to be struck. With this literary agnostic, character counted as an asset. His partiality for the Bible seemed so strong that nothing less than the most overwhelming proofs could have induced him to give up its supernatural origin. Not that any one whose opinion counted for anything was likely to be robbed of his religious beliefs by Arnold's authority. What it did was merely to neutralise a part of the enormous authority arrayed on the other side, procuring, to that extent, free play for the action of pure reason.

That such works as those which we have passed in review

should have been put forth under cover of religious zeal shows to what lengths the criticism of all theology had been carried, and how great a revolution had been accomplished in public opinion since the appearance of 'Ecce Homo.' I shall have occasion hereafter to point out to what extent this altered tone had its origin in the wave of anti-clerical feeling which at that time was passing over Europe, and was affecting, although with less intensity than on the Continent, the conditions of religious controversy in England. Arnold seemed curiously unaware of this anti-clerical movement, and in general of the fact that clericalism has anything to do with religion. For him superstition, which he prefers to call by its German name, Aberglaube, is merely excessive belief, not belief with a peculiar social value, religious belief developed and intensified by being propagated through masses of human beings, and for that reason readily made instrumental to the interests of a priestly corporation. While 'Ecce Homo' gives a thoroughly one-sided view of Christ as the founder of a Church rather than of a religion, 'Literature and Dogma' altogether ignores the Church, alike in relation to the Bible, to theology, and to conduct. The clergy are taught to evaporate the creeds into an ethical mysticism, but what effect that process will have on their own corporate position is never considered.

It happened, significantly enough, that the only critic of 'Literature and Dogma' about whose tone its author had any reason to complain was a writer in the 'Dublin Review,'[1] a principal organ of the British Roman Catholic hierarchy. Yet even this fact did not open his eyes to the clerical danger. The reviewer's want of urbanity, it seems, was due solely to the culpable carelessness of the English Government in not providing an endowment for the higher education of the Roman Catholics in Ireland. A different policy does not seem to have mollified the manners of Roman controversialists in Germany and France.

Anyhow, without the anti-clerical movement Arnold would probably not have enjoyed full freedom for the expression of his own views, while the movement itself must have profited incalculably by their dissemination. In another way also they may be connected with the political interests of the age.

[1] 'God and the Bible,' pp. 3–4.

W. E. Forster, the Minister who framed the Education Act of 1870, an Act basing the primary education of the people on Bible-reading, was married to Arnold's eldest sister. Now 'Literature and Dogma' was primarily intended to uphold the Bible as an instrument of education against the attacks of advanced Liberals, with the implied understanding also that popular Biblical study was to be dissociated from the doctrinal commentaries on its text. On what principle of selection the Scriptures were to have been edited for this purpose did not appear; but to judge by the quotations in that work, only a very limited portion of the Old Testament at least would have been available for the use of schools.

A little before the appearance of 'Literature and Dogma' in the 'Cornhill Magazine,' the greatest educationalist of the age had incidentally put forward a philosophy of religion, less clearly worded than Arnold's, but still more remote from the doctrinal traditions of Christendom. Jowett used the opportunity offered him as the translator of Plato to express his opinions with greater freedom than when he was commenting on St. Paul's Epistles. His position too had now become one of higher authority than before. Triumphing over all the petty persecutions of his enemies, the most illustrious of the liberal clergy had attained the goal of his ambition in becoming Master of Balliol. A second series of 'Essays and Reviews' had been talked of, but the plan fell through. A just perception of what the times required had suggested the enterprise of 1860, and an equally just sentiment opposed its repetition. Broad Church principles were provisionally out of date; and besides, Jowett had always disclaimed the name of Broad Church. 'What is broad,' he said, 'has limits'; his thoughts would submit to none. Neither then, nor perhaps ever, did he reach definite conclusions. But there were religious beliefs which he very emphatically repudiated, just as Plato did. What they were cannot be completely specified; probably a good deal of Hebrew mythology would have come under the category. Thus when the Platonic Socrates lays down as a first principle that with God there is no variableness or change of form, and proceeds to infer from this that the gods do not appear to men in the ways described by the poets, this is

expressed in Jowett's summary by phrases such as 'deities who prowl about at night in strange disguises,' and 'all that blasphemous nonsense with which mothers fool the manhood out of their children';[1]—irresistibly recalling more modern lessons given by English mothers to their children out of Genesis. There is a warrant in the Greek text for every word used; and yet, somehow, reading the 'Republic' itself, where these passages occur, does not suggest such a direct application to our own nursery teaching.

Much more direct evidence, however, of what the Master really thought is forthcoming. It may be remembered how in assigning Sir Thomas More his true place as the first English rationalist,[2] attention was called to a passage from the 'Utopia' quoted in Jowett's introduction to the 'Republic' about the religion of the ideal state. It amounts to this, that some Utopians 'worship a man who was once of excellent virtue as the highest God'; while 'the most and wisest reject all such notions.' The passage is open to more than one construction, although, personally, I consider it equivalent to the rejection of supernatural Christianity as a popular superstition. But even admitting that the principles, political rather than metaphysical, for which More afterwards both inflicted and suffered death, are to be taken as explaining or retracting his literary record, the value of the quotation as evidence of Jowett's own opinion remains unaltered.

A long discussion on the meaning of immortality, suggested by the argument in Plato's 'Phaedo,' gives an even more interesting glimpse into the development of Jowett's religious philosophy, although the studied ambiguity of his language, and perhaps a certain speculative irresolution, prevent us from fastening a definite interpretation on the views alternately exhibited and withdrawn. Immortality considered as an endless prolongation of personal consciousness is first discussed, or rather it is deftly and delicately manipulated, with reference both to the connexion between soul and body, and to the future state of the surviving individual, however constituted. As a provisional satisfaction of our curiosity, we are at any rate led to the denial of retributive sufferings, which would be merely

[1] 'The Dialogues of Plato,' Vol. III., p. 30 (2nd ed.).

[2] *Supra*, Vol. I., pp. 79, 80.

vindictive and useless. But future rewards fare no better. It is shocking that the worst should expect what the best do not merit. Besides, a state of unaltered felicity cannot be conceived. 'To beings constituted as we are the monotony of singing psalms would be as great an infliction as the pains of hell, and might be even pleasantly interrupted by them.'[1] There remains the alternative of regarding futurity as an endless process of improvement. But our notions of such progress are connected in experience with the history of the race rather than with the individual life. That the race should have gradually improved is, at any rate, a fresh argument against vindictive punishment in another world. The idea of God as pure goodness is repugnant to such a theory. Belief in the divine goodness, involving as it does the final victory of good over evil, is the real ground for our belief in immortality. But good and evil are themselves relative notions, what was right at a lower stage becoming wrong at a higher. If we want an absolute, apparently we must be content to take the movement itself as such. Now 'God is the author of good and not of evil. Or rather he is justice, truth, love, order, *he is the very progress of which we were speaking*, and wherever these qualities are present, whether in the human soul or in the order of nature, there is God. . . . We have been mistakenly seeking for him apart from us instead of in us. . . . And we become united to him not by mystical absorption but by partaking . . . of the truth and justice and love which he himself is.'[2]

The words which I have italicised are precisely equivalent to Fichte's famous declaration, resulting in his expulsion from Jena, that God is the moral order of the world. It first appeared as a rationalistic substitute for Kant's moral theology, and was at once denounced as atheism by the defenders of old-fashioned German orthodoxy. Ethical pantheism would have been a more expressive title for this new Zoroastrianism, which is the natural compromise between faith and reason wherever moral interests take the lead in education, as is the rule at Oxford and Cambridge, while metaphysical pantheism fills the same position where intellectual interests reign supreme.

John Stuart Mill's 'Three Essays on Religion' were not

[1] 'The Dialogues of Plato,' Vol. I., p. 412. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 416.

published until 1874, the year after his death. But the 'Essay on Theism,' which is much the longest and most important of them, was written between the years 1868 and 1870, and therefore belongs to the same period as Matthew Arnold's 'St. Paul' and Jowett's Introductions to Plato. It also offers a certain general resemblance to them in its combination of negation with reconstruction, and therefore may most appropriately be considered in the present connexion.

The two other essays contained in Mill's posthumous volume bear the titles 'Nature' and 'The Utility of Religion.' Of these the second has been briefly but sufficiently noticed in a former chapter.[1] It does not seem to have exercised any perceptible influence on public opinion. The essay on Nature received a much larger share of attention—proportionately, indeed, much more than it had any claim to—while at the same time its purpose was most seriously misunderstood. Both the attention and the misunderstanding arose from the same cause, which was no other than the general interest in pessimism. Schopenhauer, who first gave that philosophy a systematic shape, was beginning to be talked of among us; and anything at all approaching the same point of view was sure to be read in the light thrown on it by his fascinating genius. Mill was not a pessimist—rather the contrary indeed;—but the course of his argument led him into making some remarks that looked like an adverse criticism on the material constitution of things, although in reality they were nothing of the kind. To understand his position we must remember that he was educated to be a reformer, that he became a reformer, that he always thought, wrote, and acted with a view to his reforming mission. Now, most reformers in the eighteenth century, and not a few in the nineteenth, have taken their stand on the idea of Nature. Natural religion, according to them, is the only true religion, natural law the only just law, natural habits the only habits conducive to health. All errors and evils are a corruption of the original order; were this restored, the world would be made good and happy. But such an elastic idea as nature can easily be drawn into the service of any cause whatever. What we are accustomed to readily passes for the only natural arrangement; and custom is the

[1] *Supra*, p. 193.

very stronghold of prejudice. Thus before the French Revolution was well over, a reactionary philosopher, the celebrated Louis de Bonald, appealed to nature in defence of the old monarchy[1] as confidently as Rousseau and his disciples had appealed to her in defence of the new democracy. On the other hand, English reformers had never been on close terms with this treacherous ally. Bentham and his school would have nothing to do with her; and Mill in particular found her supposed laws constantly quoted against him when he advocated the enfranchisement of women. Accordingly he criticises the idea of nature simply from the ethical point of view, considered, that is, as a standard for the guidance of action. Nor had he any difficulty in proving that nature, when personified and looked at as a moral and responsible agent, is no model for our imitation: to act after her fashion would be to commit what in human beings we call the most atrocious crimes. Mill brought out this aspect of natural law with singular passion and eloquence, but, as I have said, with no intention of framing an indictment against the world's constitution or its Author, if any; in short, without meaning to attack religion.

Still, the question had a religious side. James Mill had learned from Butler's 'Analogy' to condemn natural religion as inconsistent with justice. He agreed that the moral argument, so fatal to Christianity, was equally fatal to the optimistic deism of Tindal; and his son took up the same opinion, apparently without submitting it to an impartial examination. But the younger Mill did not think that the existence of undeserved suffering in the world sufficed to demonstrate that there was no God. It merely proved that the Creator, if any, could not be both all-powerful and all-good. There might be a God of great but limited power, with whom it was man's duty to co-operate 'not by imitating but by perpetually striving to amend the course of nature.'[2] Whether such a God exists is a question to be determined by a candid enquiry into the phenomena of nature. And Mill evidently undertook his essay on Theism with the possibility of such a result as a tenable hypothesis in view.

In discussing the respective attitudes of Comte and Mill

[1] In his 'Théorie du Pouvoir.'

[2] 'Three Essays on Religion,' p. 65.

towards theism, I pointed out the exaggerated value which our great logician set on the argument from design. That was the tribute he paid to the time-spirit, to the extraordinary vogue of natural theology all through the three decades or so during which English science was corrupted and distorted by the religious revival. It appears in the review of Sedgwick, in the 'Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy,' and now for the last time, even after Grote's searching criticism, in the essay on Theism, where it passes muster as a very good reason for believing that living organisms are the work of a creative intelligence. He admits that it has been weakened to some extent by Darwin's hypothesis of Natural Selection. But while allowing the complete legitimacy, on inductive principles, of that hypothesis, and fully appreciating its relevance to theological controversy, Mill never seems to have got over his original dislike for something so alien from his own half-French habits of thought. 'Everyone's first impulse,' he tells us—not very accurately—'was to reject so bold a suggestion at once.'[1] And for his own part he never goes beyond the rather grudging concession that it is 'not so absurd as it looks.'[2] Meanwhile, pending further enquiry, 'the adaptations in Nature afford a large balance of probability in favour of creation by intelligence.'[3]

Beyond this balance of probability, large or small, there are no arguments for theism. With his philosophy, Mill will of course not listen to any such 'transcendental' proofs as satisfied Buckle. His denial of moral intuitions leaves the argument from conscience—common to Mansel with the two Newmans—in the air. And quite apart from the nature of the process by which we come to recognise it as binding on ourselves, the very meaning of moral obligation seems to exclude any reference to the will of a superior as its source.[4] Equally futile is the argument from the supposed necessity of a First Cause. The law of universal causation applies only to the changes in things, not to the permanent element or elements in which those changes occur. What is permanent in the material universe does not need to be accounted for; what is changeable implies

[1] 'System of Logic,' Vol. II., p. 19.
[2] 'Essays on Religion,' p. 174.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Op. cit.*, pp. 164–5.

an infinite series of prior changes. In other words, a First Cause, so far from being necessitated by causation, is incompatible with it. And this conclusion receives further confirmation from the modern theory of Conservation, according to which the amount of energy in the universe is a fixed quantity, never being either increased or diminished.

Some philosophers have claimed for mind the prerogative of originating movement, and have reasoned from its supposed exceptional nature to the existence of a creative intelligence whence the universe has proceeded. But science shows that our minds never create force; even assuming freewill, volition does no more than turn pre-existing force into a new channel—a feat which the unconscious forces of nature are constantly performing on a far grander scale.

Strangely enough, Mill did not see that the theistic argument from design can logically be driven up into the argument from simple causation, of which he makes such short work. A designing intelligence would itself require to be designed, and so on *ad infinitum*. Nor is this its only weakness. Our experience of intelligence associates it so invariably with a certain material organisation as to suggest that there must be a reason for their constant conjunction, an impossibility in the nature of things that the one should subsist without the other. At the same time, it is possible that he had considered the latter argument and had dismissed it as invalid. For as a practical reformer he greatly disliked the notion of such unchangeable necessities, and sedulously discouraged the belief in them. And as a Berkeleyan he habitually conceived matter in terms of mind rather than mind in terms of matter.[1] As it happens, he reserves this topic for a later stage of the enquiry. In the chapter on immortality, the ideal view reappears as an argument for believing in the possibility of a disembodied spirit surviving the dissolution of the body. For the purposes of his thesis such an arrangement was highly convenient: for had the

[1] Mr. Herbert Paul, referring to the 'Essays on Religion,' tells us that 'Mill had not found materialism a satisfactory explanation of the universe' ('A History of Modern England,' Vol. III., p. 425). Mill, as an agnostic, found all 'explanations of the universe' highly unsatisfactory; while as a Berkeleyan he would at all times regard materialism with less favour than any other. But perhaps by materialism Mr. Paul means the Darwinian theory.

cuckoo's egg of idealism been introduced earlier, it would have pitched the whole theological brood out of the nest. In plainer language, the argument from design implies that independent reality of material conditions which idealism denies. More than this, it reduces personality, causation, nay, even time, to functions of consciousness without real meaning in abstraction from the totality of its manifestations. All alike are phenomenal, and one phenomenon has no more claim to independent perpetuity than another.

Mill's very moderate concessions to the logic of theology were received, on their first publication, as a biographical curiosity rather than as a serious contribution to thought. People mistook them for a sort of private confession of faith—a partial return to religion which, had the philosopher's life been prolonged, might eventually have become complete. But his 'Autobiography' ought to have shown them that this was a misconception. He had no personal interest in religion. The hopes of humanity and the memory of his wife were to him the only objects deserving of worship. Others, if they chose, might accept, without the reproach of being irrational, a God of limited power and perhaps not unqualified beneficence. Limitation has become more popular in our own time than it was a generation ago; and the most modern school of philosophy seems to have accepted a finite God as the basis of a reconstructed religion. This 'hypothesis of limited powers,' as Mill calls it, would certainly have been more acceptable to Collins and Tindal than to Butler. It seems unfair, then, to compliment the author of the 'Analogy' at their expense, or to say, as Mill does, that 'what is morally objectionable in the Christian theory of the world, is objectionable only when taken in conjunction with the doctrine of an omnipotent God.'[1] What the deists fought against was objectionable when considered as the character of any God at all, being in fact partiality, vindictiveness, and cruelty of the worst description. What Butler retorted on them was no deliberate iniquity but merely the hardships incidental to a government carried on by means of general laws, untempered by occasional interventions for the relief of righteous individuals.

When Mill goes on to weigh with judicial impartiality the

[1] 'Essays on Religion,' p. 314.

evidence for and against the truth of revealed religion, his verdict is more distinctly thrown on the side of eighteenth-century rationalism. In particular the whole question of miracles is reviewed with a completeness and lucidity which leave little more to be said on the subject. He concludes that, without their being rigorously impossible, no miracles of which any record has been preserved are entitled to our belief. No evidence can prove a miracle to any one who has not satisfied himself on other grounds that there is a God who created the world, and who is able by a mere exercise of his will to interrupt the course of nature for some special purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished. Assuming the existence of such a creative intelligence to have been established by the argument from design, we have what logicians call a *vera causa*, a real force adequate to the performance of the alleged miraculous act. But the difficulties of belief are not terminated by this admission. Assuming experience to show—and for the scientific theist it does unquestionably show—that the Deity rules his creation by general laws, that is to say by invariable trains of physical antecedents and consequents, a grave presumption exists against the probability of their having been interrupted in any particular instance. Some apologists have endeavoured to pass off miracles as effects of a higher law. But Mill exposes the utter meaninglessness of this celebrated phrase. For 'when we say that an ordinary physical fact always takes place according to some invariable law, we mean that it is connected by invariable sequence or coexistence with some definite set of physical antecedents;' recurring when they are present, other things being equal, and not recurring in their absence. Where an event occurs in the presence of its established physical conditions, there is no miracle; where it occurs in their absence, there is no law.[1]

Those who wish to pursue this interesting discussion into all its details must be referred to Mill's luminous disquisition, where every apologetic shift will be found duly taken into account;—so much so, indeed, that an uncandid controversialist might compile a rather plausible defence of Christian evidences out of the materials there supplied. But his own conclusion is stated in perfectly unambiguous terms.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 224.

Miracles have no claim whatever to the character of historical facts, and are wholly invalid as evidences of any revelation. Incidentally too there are certain expressions of opinion, valuable as coming from an educated layman of the highest intelligence and mental integrity. After contending for the general trustworthiness of Christ's character and sayings as reported in the Synoptic Gospels, on the ground that his disciples were incapable of inventing them, Mill goes on to observe that 'what *could* be added and interpolated by a disciple we may see in the mystical parts of the Gospel of St. John, matter imported from Philo and the Alexandrian Platonists and put into the mouth of the Saviour in long speeches about himself such as the other Gospels contain not the slightest vestige of,[1] though pretended to have been delivered on occasions of the deepest interest, and when his principal followers were present. . . . The East was full of men who could have stolen any quantity of this poor stuff.'[2] And he does not hesitate to declare—of course on Synoptic evidence—that Christ 'never made the smallest pretension to be God, and would probably have thought such a pretension blasphemous.'[3]

We may trace a certain parallelism and harmony between Mill's attempted reconstruction of religion and the schemes simultaneously put forward by Matthew Arnold and Jowett. All three represent God as a power working for good, and the religious life as the co-operation of man with the beneficent power in that purpose. Jowett would not improbably have identified this interpretation with the essential meaning of Christianity; Mill and Arnold would certainly have done so. To all, the personality of God remained more or less doubtful; but curiously enough, to Mill, who had been brought up without it, the idea seemed to possess more value than to his fellow-sceptics. While sympathising warmly with Comte's religion of humanity, he never seems to have felt drawn towards pantheism in any form. In this respect the professional philosopher is distinctly less philosophical than the

[1] This is not quite accurate, as we see by the mystical passage, Matt. xi. 27, Luke x. 22.

[2] 'Essays,' p. 254.

[3] P. 255.

Oxford professors of Poetry and Greek; at any rate they perceived, far more clearly than he did, the inherent fallacy of the teleological argument. More remarkably still, as between Arnold and Jowett, the superiority in breadth and grasp of thought belongs not to the layman but to the cleric. Perhaps his early studies in Comte and Hegel gave the Master that living sense of forward movement as the true Absolute, the elevation of man to God, which the great poet of culture never perfectly assimilated, although more than once, both in poetry and prose, he has given it a high if incomplete expression.

If the phases of English thought now passed in review remind us by their positive and reconstructive features of the attempts at compromise and conciliation so characteristic of the previous decade, their outspoken and far-reaching negations bring them into relation with the more purely destructive criticism of the succeeding years. It would be a mistake, however, to regard this more advanced rationalism of the later seventies as having arisen by spontaneous development from the sceptical religiosity which seemed to herald its approach, or even from the complete emancipation of physical science, and gradual extension of scientific methods to the whole field of speculation. What provoked a scientific attack on the very foundations of religious belief was an aggressive return of superstition, threatening the very existence of the new spirit, both in politics and philosophy. We have now, with the help of contemporary documents, to trace the workings of this sinister influence at home and abroad, reserving for another chapter the narrative of how reason, fighting for existence, brought her last forces into action, and claimed the whole field of reality for her own.

English bishops met the steady spread of German philology and German pantheism with vague talk about 'doing something for the honour of our Lord's Godhead,' or 'the blessed truth that God is a Person,' phrases which the ineffaceable mockery of Matthew Arnold made anything but an honour or a blessing to themselves. Theism had already found a far abler advocate than they could supply; but this was one in whose hands it became associated with other religious beliefs

much less to their liking. Now that the liberal movement in religious thought was being pushed to the extreme of denying, in more or less decorous terms, the fundamental dogmas of theology, it seemed appropriate that the theologian who had foreseen and denounced that movement from the beginning should come forward to reassert the claims of authority, under the form of traditional mysticism, against that misuse of reason which the philosophy of rationalism is particularly supposed to imply.

Long before Dr. Newman was raised to that exalted dignity with which his name is now inseparably associated, he had once more become a conspicuous figure in religious controversy and the chief intellectual representative of Roman Christianity in the eyes of his countrymen. Even Mr. Swinburne could sincerely address him as—

> 'Great and wise, clear-souled and high of heart,
> . . . last flower of Catholic love, that grows
> Amid bare thorns their only thornless rose,
> From the fierce juggling of the priests' loud mart
> Yet alien, yet unspotted and apart
> From the blind hard foul rout whose shameless shows
> Mock the sweet heaven whose secret no man knows
> With prayers and curses and the soothsayer's art.' [1]

He whom the author of the 'Hymn to Man' saluted with such enthusiasm was naturally the oracle of pseudo-philosophers in the communion he had entered, and the idol of pseudo-Catholics in the communion he had left. The 'Apologia,' published in 1864, was the beginning of what may be called Newman's second reputation with the great public. But at the time it had merely a biographical interest, as the literary disclosure of an attaching personality. At most it told on opinion by the startling presentation of Catholicism as the only logical alternative to atheism—a claim not new in itself, but new to that generation of Englishmen. The 'Grammar of Assent,' published six years later (1870), is a work of much more serious pretensions. What Carlyle so untruly said of Coleridge's distinction between Reason and Understanding might more appropriately be applied to Newman's attempted

[1] 'Two Leaders' ('Poems and Ballads,' Second Series, p. 155). I assume, on internal evidence, that the two leaders are no other than Newman and Carlyle.

reconstitution of logic. By providing new canons of inference it endeavours to win acceptance for what the old logic had flung away as incredible.

This New Organon of credulity falls into two leading divisions, apparently meant by the author to be taken in close connexion, but really exhibiting hardly any internal coherence. One, which fills the greater part of the book and gives its title to the whole, is a sort of informal logic, constructed for the benefit of those who are conscious of believing on insufficient evidence, and wish to be supplied with a system of intellectual casuistry to justify their departure from the strict standard of intellectual honesty. Their justification, to put it briefly, consists in the assurance that everybody else is as lax as they are. According to Newman, nearly all reasoning rests on some personal bias, and leads to conclusions strong out of all proportion to the proofs alleged in their support. As belief cannot create its own object, it would seem to follow from such sweeping scepticism that religious convictions, for all but those who hold them, must be uncertain to the same extent in which they exceed their evidence, and in so far as the probabilities composing that evidence are themselves the product of subjective conditions. Newman, however, supposes that in the particular instance of assent to religious truths this somewhat haphazard navigation has been steered into a safe port by the guidance of supernatural wisdom. But the very existence of such guidance rests on no better foundation than any other belief; and so far as his reasoning goes, it might be claimed with equal justice by every religion that ever commanded assent. Indeed, the syntax of this grammar might be applied with as satisfactory results to the constructions of materialism as to the constructions of Catholic theism.

What Newman has to say in defence of Catholic theism forms the second division of his book. But it might as well have found a place in any other context. There is no novelty, nor the pretence of any, in his arguments. Conscience, according to him, assures us of God's existence. That is to say, the idea of a moral law implies the existence of a moral lawgiver who imposes it on us. The fallacy is obvious, even without the help of those historical investigations which prove that the law and its recognition have not been given but evolved. For

morality, to exist at all, implies a reciprocity of obligations between related persons; a personal God who created mankind would be bound by it equally with his creatures. Whatever else he made, he no more made that than he made the laws of number, and therefore it no more proves his existence than the multiplication table does.

Like Butler, Newman fully admits and maintains that natural religion is the foundation of revealed religion. His natural religion, however, is not the philosophical deism of a one-sided intellectual civilisation, but the primitive superstition of uncivilised races. As he interprets it, this primitive faith implies the sense of sin, the dim consciousness of a fall, and the necessity of making atonement by the vicarious sufferings of an innocent victim. In point of fact, sacrifices are now known to have no such origin. They have been traced to the custom of slaying and eating the totem or tribal god, for the purpose of assimilating its substance; and the sin, if any, connected with the transaction consisted in the sacrifice itself, for which apologies were duly made to the sacred animal. In more developed societies the sacrifice was a present made by the worshipper to his god, as often as not, to secure the divine assistance for some immoral purpose. And, of course, as the god's favour might be bought, his anger might be bought off; but the process is one not needing to be interpreted by any moral intuition; on the contrary, morality has always tended to denounce and abolish such breaches of its laws.

Our business, however, is not to undertake the rather needless office of answering Newman. For us the interest of his last important work consists in its uncompromising presentation, as essential to Catholic orthodoxy, of precisely those Christian doctrines which English Broad Churchmen had long been endeavouring to eliminate from the Christian religion. These were, the idea of an inherited curse on the human race,[1] the vicarious punishment of the innocent in satisfaction for sin,[2] and the endlessness of hell-torments.[3] About the last the

[1] This is rather implied than expressly stated in the description of the alienation of God from the world, pp. 396 ff., especially in the phrase, 'either there is no Creator or He has disowned His creatures.'

[2] 'Grammar of Assent,' pp. 405 ff., where Butler's view is quoted and endorsed.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 422.

'Grammar of Assent' contains some not very intelligible reservations, to the effect that endless suffering may not necessarily be accompanied by the consciousness of its hopeless nature.[1] One hardly sees why such a moralist as Newman's God should spare his victims this extreme aggravation of their mental agonies. Anyhow, the opinion that 'the Creator does not punish except in the sense of correcting,' is stigmatised as 'simply false'; together with such errors as 'that the only intelligible worship is to act well our part in the world, that the only sensible repentance is to do better in future, and that if we do our duties in this life we may take our chance in the next.'[2] These are 'the opinions of a civilized age,' and are no more reconcilable with the future Cardinal's Catholicism than modern civilisation itself was reconcilable with the pretensions of Pius IX. They 'contradict the primary teachings of nature in the human race'—just as all advanced morality, including the Sermon on the Mount, contradicts them.

The immense importance of Newman's declarations lay in the fact of their relieving Calvinism from the exclusive responsibility fastened on it by liberal English Churchmen for the dogmas so passionately assailed by rationalism in recent years. What Calvin, or Luther, or the Puritans, or the Evangelicals, or the Dissenters held as distinctive doctrines of their own in opposition to any real or ideal Catholic standards sank into insignificance by comparison. Whether the fate of the damned was foredoomed or simply foreknown; whether the responsibility for Adam's guilt was removed by baptism or by some undated gift of grace; whether sacrificial magic was limited to Calvary or repeated every day in the Mass;—these were questions interesting from their connexion with sacerdotal claims, but interesting for no other reason to those who denied the underlying assumptions so nakedly exhibited in the 'Grammar of Assent.' Rome had no relief to offer from the beliefs which most offended a Protestant rationalist in the creed of his youth; while she added much to them both practically dangerous and intellectually repulsive.

With regard to the Puseyite or Ritualist Anglicans, they found themselves in an awkward dilemma, or rather would have found themselves in one had their logical capacity been

[1] *Loc. cit.* [2] P. 416.

more developed. Their sympathies with a civilised age, more particularly as regarded hell, and their general aversion from Evangelical theology, must have made them recoil from Newman's frankly barbarous religion. On the other hand, so profound a theologian could not be suspected of holding anything but the pure doctrine of that universal Church to which they all professed to belong. The 'Grammar of Assent' stood for the irreducible minimum of dogma; and that minimum included just the beliefs most at war with the new philosophy of evolution whose authority was rapidly replacing the crumbling stronghold of Biblical infallibility.

On the two moot-points just referred to, evolution and Biblical infallibility, Newman was, so far, silent. Fortunately, however, we have documents leaving no doubt about the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church in England with regard to both. It may be gathered from certain volumes of Essays by Catholic writers, published between 1865 and 1874. They are edited by Archbishop (afterwards Cardinal) Manning, and include contributions from his pen. One of these deals with the Inspiration of Scripture, and recites the dogmatic declarations of the Church on that momentous subject. We learn that there are certain sacred books, namely the Old and New Testament Canon, comprising the whole Bible as known to English Protestants, together with certain additions rejected by them as apocryphal; that the said books are inspired and have God for their Author; and that by consequence the hypothesis is excluded that any part of them 'is of merely human authorship, and therefore that falsehood or error can be found in them.'[1]

Manning interprets this privilege of infallibility as not extending to statements apparently inconsistent with the facts of science or of chronology.[2] Other difficulties may be due to the mistakes of copyists, or to misunderstandings on our part. Where the narrative exhibits such apparent impossibilities as those pointed out by Colenso, they need not trouble a Catholic believer. 'Let him be sure that there is some solution, whether he can find it out or not. A Divine Voice [*i.e.* the Council of

[1] 'Essays on Religion and Literature,' Second Series, p. 358.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 380.

Trent] has declared that the Sacred Books were written by inspiration, and that whatsoever those books contain . . . is simply to be believed because it is divinely true.' To those who call such conduct irrational and perverse the answer is—'We neither derive our religion from the Scriptures, nor does it depend upon them.'[1] A rationalist would, of course, reply that by good logic the truth of Roman Catholicism does depend on them, in the sense of depending on their truth. The one infallibility stands pledged to the other, and is blown to pieces by the detection in it of one single flaw. The question ultimately resolves itself into a comparison of probabilities. Which is more likely, that the pretensions of the Roman priesthood are somewhat exaggerated, or that the Jewish priesthood stated nothing that was untrue in the Hexateuch and in Chronicles?

Like all such short cuts to belief, Manning's method suggests an extension of its range. Science has its difficulties like theology, although to a much less degree. One of these is how to explain certain historical phenomena by natural causes. Religious apologists in particular love to represent the rise of Christianity as inexplicable except by supernatural agency. Sometimes the Gospel teaching itself, and sometimes the alleged miracles accompanying it, are credited with superhuman origin, not only because it is claimed for them by their first historians, but also because no other origin can, consistently with our experience, be conceived. In this connexion the rationalistic explanations of the German critics are habitually quoted as having failed, and as proving by their failure that the attempt to dispense with supernaturalism is hopeless. And much the same used to be said about other origins—the origin of new species, and the origin of civilisation, for example. It is still sometimes said about the origin of life, the origin of consciousness, and the origin of human reason. But the naturalist's faith in the law of universal causation is no more shaken by such residual phenomena than Manning's faith in Scriptural infallibility was shaken by Colenso's arithmetical arguments. And a Catholic of the Cardinal's school cannot call the rationalist's position an unreasonable one. There is this much at least to be said for it, that the law of universal

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 384.

causation, understood in Laplace's sense, rests on a vast body of authentic evidence, and is continually being verified by fresh experience, whereas the infallibility claimed for themselves by certain ecclesiastical personages, described as collectively constituting a single female, rests on nothing better than their own word, falsified by every advance in historical criticism.

It would have been well for their cause had the Archbishop's collaborators followed his example, and contented themselves with the summary method of an appeal to Church authority against modern criticism and science. One of them, however, has enriched these volumes of Catholic essays with replies to Colenso and Darwin not reflecting much credit on the manners or the reasoning powers of his order. Newman wisely observes that 'to call names, to impute motives, to accuse of sophistry, to be impetuous and overbearing, is the part of men who are alarmed for their own position, and fear to have it approached too nearly.' Any one who takes the trouble to examine Dr. Laing's comments on Colenso, Huxley, and Darwin, will, I think, consider that these words—written, of course, without any reference to that ecclesiastic—fail to convey an adequate impression of their truculent and even brutal tone. And the logic of the papers is on a par with their urbanity. On Newman's showing, then, we may fairly infer that evolution and the higher criticism were at that time regarded by the infallibilists as their most dangerous enemies.

The new importance of English Catholicism and the aggressive attitude of its leaders towards modern thought would in any case have forced the rationalists to make it the direct object of their attacks. Hitherto they had troubled themselves very little about what seemed wholly obsolete pretensions; and the same easy tolerance was extended to the High Church party within the Anglican communion, whether distinguished as Tractarians, Puseyites, or Ritualists. These too had the merit of being opposed to the hated Evangelicals; they were not Sabbatarians; and their affinities with scholarship and fine art supplied a common ground where cultivated men of all parties might meet. Hostility to the Irish Establishment acted as a bond of union between freethinkers and Catholics, whether Roman or Anglican, during the whole campaign that ended

with its overthrow in 1869. That year, however, was signalised by another event of greater importance, which, combined with certain momentous changes in the political situation, was destined to react powerfully on the courses of speculative thought. This was the meeting of the Vatican Council, leading, within eight months, to the proclamation of Papal Infallibility.

How far the Pope claimed immunity from error, and whether such a claim on his part could be reconciled with the dogmatic tradition of the Catholic Church, were not questions in which rationalists, as such, could interest themselves very deeply. There seemed no particular reason why a body of religious believers who had already swallowed so many absurdities should not swallow one absurdity more. Assuming infallibility to exist anywhere, it might just as well belong to a single individual as to a whole community, or to a collection of books. But the point at issue acquired a new significance when its practical bearings were made clear. To understand these it must be borne in mind that for some persons who followed the debates of the Vatican Council—or what was allowed to transpire about them—day by day, Papal Infallibility meant very much more than it means for us after thirty-five years' experience of its apparent innocuousness. At that time the belief was nearly universal that what Pius IX. and his Jesuit supporters really wanted was to make certain pronouncements of his, contained in a document known as the Syllabus, binding on the consciences of all Catholic believers. The Syllabus is a compendious summary of the errors condemned in various allocutions and letters from the hand of Pius IX. himself. It enumerates and condemns eighty distinct propositions, most of them being, by their very nature, obviously irreconcilable with Catholic orthodoxy as ordinarily understood. Some few, however, are of a quite different character, being admitted principles of modern civilisation, and generally accepted by enlightened Catholics as perfectly compatible with the most scrupulous fidelity to their religion. Foremost among these is Art. 24, declaring that 'the Church has not the power to use force.' To contradict this proposition amounts to asserting the legitimacy of persecution as practised before the advent of modern liberalism. So much indeed is claimed by denouncing the dangerous doctrine of Art. 78 that 'it has

laudably been ordained by the law in some countries called Catholic that immigrants shall enjoy the free exercise of their own individual religion whatever it be.' It is therefore quite logical to add, as a last error, that 'the Roman Pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself to . . . progress, liberalism and modern civilisation.'

To deny the right of exercising individual worship, whether 'in countries called Catholic,' or anywhere else, seems to bring the principle of religious liberty within the sphere of morals, and to condemn it by virtue of that infallible authority the Pope's claim to which was endorsed by the Council. At any rate rationalists cannot be blamed for affixing that sense to the Vatican decrees, and making the whole authoritative system responsible for their logical consequences. Since then, Catholicism, consistently carried out, leads to persecution, and since its official representative is only waiting for an opportunity to revive the policy of his predecessors in the sixteenth century, Catholicism must be destroyed. Not certainly by such means as the Supreme Pontiff would employ were he able—that is to say by brute force—but by force of argument, by mercilessly bringing to bear the destructive action of reason on religious belief, according to the most approved methods of modern thought.

To make the attack more effectual it was no longer confined to the specific doctrines which distinguished the Roman from the Protestant creed, nor even to those which distinguish revealed from natural religion. The new scientific discoveries and theories, originally presented in a way as little offensive as possible to theology, were now as sedulously put in an opposite light, as totally subversive of the supernatural in all its forms. Prayer is an attempt to violate natural law. Freewill is excluded by the physiological mechanism of the nervous system. Mind depends so completely on that mechanism that consciousness cannot survive its destruction. Evolution makes God superfluous; nor, apart from evolution, does there seem any possibility of his existence without a material manifestation of which the universe offers no evidence whatever.

This, however, is anticipating on developments, a full account of which must be reserved for the following chapter. At present our business lies solely with the course of ecclesiastical policy which provoked them. Owing perhaps to the

violent opposition encountered by Infallibilism as first understood, no immediate attempt was made by the responsible authorities to interpret the Vatican decrees as an Oecumenical ratification of the Syllabus. Danger from Rome in the shape of an attempt to revive religious persecution must, on any view of the new dogma, have seemed too remote for practical men to trouble their heads about it. As it happened, however, political events soon gave the Pope and his auxiliaries an opportunity for exercising their influence in a much more mischievous manner than by uttering impotent denunciations of progress, liberalism, and modern civilisation.

In September, 1870, the Temporal Power came to an end. Now, whether rightly or wrongly does not concern us here, but at any rate in accordance with a fixed tradition of immense antiquity, both Pius IX. and his far abler successor, Leo XIII., were convinced that their spiritual functions could not be adequately performed without the possession of an independent political dominion, having its seat in the sacred city of Rome; and assertions to the contrary figure conspicuously among the errors denounced by the Syllabus. On the other hand a united Italy can hardly be conceived without Rome for its capital; and for that reason Italian unity, ever since the fall of the Western Empire, has found its most deadly enemy in the papal power. By a singular combination of circumstances German unity became associated at a very early period with the union of Germany and Italy under the same crown, and with the restoration of Rome to her old imperial position; as a consequence of which fatality it was exposed to the same disintegrating influence. Now, little as the modern German empire has to do with the pretensions to universal dominion put forward by the old Saxon and Suabian dynasties, it began life by incurring the same deadly hostility on the part of the Roman See—or such at least was the impression left on the minds of German statesmen in their dealings with the Vatican. That a Protestant power of the first class should arise in the heart of Europe would alone have involved a serious damage to the prestige of Catholic Christendom. To make matters worse, its rise was associated with a crushing defeat inflicted on Austria, the Church's most obedient pupil in matters of ecclesiastical legislation, and with the annihilation of the

French empire, whose fall brought with it the ruin of the temporal power. It is said that in these desperate circumstances the Pope applied for help to the new German emperor, and had the mortification of receiving a flat refusal.

Yet one chance of restoring the papal kingdom still remained. Of all claimants to the vacant French throne the legitimate heir of the Bourbon monarchy seemed to have the best hopes of success; and whether well or ill founded, an impression prevailed very widely in French society that this bigoted prince, if called to the throne of France, would use his new authority to drive the Italian government from Rome, and to reinstate Pius IX. in his former temporal dignities. It could not be expected that the German statesmen would tolerate such an aggression, involving as it would the destruction of a power which they already looked on as their future ally whenever the conflict with France should be resumed. Accordingly, just as in the Middle Ages, the disruption of Germany became a fundamental principle in the policy of the Vatican; and as a first step towards carrying out the anti-national programme, a new party, the so-called Centre, practically nominated by the Catholic Bishops, took its place on the benches of the German parliament, where it carried on an unremitting warfare against the government of Prince Bismark. The celebrated Falk laws (May, 1873) were introduced and passed for the purpose of checking this treasonable design, and were not withdrawn until their object had been secured.

As the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in France formed the pivot of this whole plot, it will easily be understood that the destruction of the French Republic became the first and most indispensable step towards its realisation.

Under the auspices of the Vatican two attempts in this direction were actually made; the first, which very nearly succeeded, in May, 1873, when Thiers was driven from the Presidency of the French Republic by the clerical majority of the National Assembly; the second in 1877, when Marshal Macmahon, a clericalist soldier, with the sanction of a clericalist Senate, wantonly dissolved a Chamber of Deputies perfectly representing the opinions of the country.

Only two months before Thiers fell a very remarkable instance was afforded of what priestly influence could do to

embarrass the legislation of our own country. It was proposed by the Liberal government then in power to complete the work of justice and conciliation in Ireland by remodelling Dublin University in such a way as to give Catholic students a share in the endowed higher education of their country without offending their religious scruples. So great were the concessions offered that, according to one Liberal member, a vote for the bill meant 'a vote of confidence in Cardinal Cullen and his priests.'[1] These authorities, however, were not satisfied—or the hierarchs at Rome were not satisfied—and the bill was wrecked through the opposition of Irish members acting under clerical dictation. The Liberal Ministry resigned; and although they provisionally resumed office, their electoral defeat early in the following year is supposed to have been connected with this catastrophe. French public opinion was not mistaken as to its meaning. 'From the palace that he calls a prison,' wrote John Lemoinne in the *Journal des Débats*, 'the Pope has just shaken the strongest government in Europe, and overthrown the greatest minister that England has ever possessed.'

So far as I have been able to ascertain, the general facts of the European situation were what I have stated them to be. What exactly happened will not be known until the whole secret correspondence of the actors in that great drama has been published. But this is a case in which the historian of opinion is concerned less with what actually happened than with what was believed to be happening at the time. And what I wish to emphasise is that rationalists had strong *prima facie* grounds for agreeing with that Allocution which declared that the Supreme Pontiff could not be reconciled with modern civilisation; and, what was more, for holding that the whole clerical interest of Catholicism practically sided with him in this hostile attitude. Therefore, having convinced themselves on other grounds that the Catholic dogmas were false, rationalists felt morally justified in giving the widest publicity to their intellectual convictions.

A part of the ill-will thus excited by Roman Catholicism fell also on the Church of England, which now seemed to be rapidly assimilating its doctrines and practices to those of the older community whence it had diverged. We saw how this

[1] Molesworth's 'History of England,' Vol. III., p. 478.

movement had been suddenly developed in the sixties, under the name of ritualism. It continued to make converts among the idlest, the silliest, and the most ignorant members of the well-to-do classes, and easily baffled some clumsy attempts made to put down the new practices by legislation. A steady stream of converts flowed from its ranks into the Roman Church, creating a confident expectation among leading Catholics, hardly shaken even now by more recent experiences, that the whole of England would before long make its submission to the author of the Syllabus.

The feeling of irritation growing up against the Anglican Church was still further complicated and aggravated by the Education Act of 1870. In the preceding chapter I referred to that great measure as an evidence of the extent to which rationalism had spread through English society, as evinced by the final arrangement of its provisions for religious teaching in the new elementary schools. And in view of earlier experience, I think it will be admitted that the exclusion of sectarian influences from the School Boards marked a distinct advance in religious liberality. For that result could only have been secured by a growing indifference to doctrinal distinctions, or by a desire to sink them in the presence of a common enemy. But at the same time, in accordance with the usual English spirit of compromise, this great concession to secularism had to be paid for by what many Liberals considered an unjustifiable concession to the rate-aided denominational schools. Not only were these sufered to go on existing with their grossly inefficient methods of education, but the grants of public money given to them were doubled, and it was provided that the school-fees of the pauper children attending them should be paid out of the rates. It aroused particular indignation that the Anglican Church, by far the richest and most powerful religious body in the country, should receive much the largest share of these subsidies, with the result, as was said, of taxing people for the spread of what they considered to be false and mischievous ideas.

It so happens that a vivid picture of the religious transformation wrought in at least one ardent and sensitive spirit by the political and social experiences of the late sixties

and early seventies, has been preserved in the published correspondence of John Richard Green, the celebrated historian of the English people. A few extracts from his letters will enable us to appreciate, better than any amount of abstract disquisition, what many besides him must then have thought and felt.

Green matriculated at Jesus College, Oxford, towards the end of 1855. He had come up 'a passionate High Churchman,' but two years' residence left him irreligious. His High Churchism had fallen 'with a great crash.' We are not told that intellectual difficulties had anything to do with the catastrophe. Indeed, at all times Green's proceedings seem to have been rather wilful and incalculable; his friends treated him as a spoiled child of genius. At first his attitude was one of cynical contempt for all religious parties; then Stanley's influence intervened, and made him just to all.[1] Maurice's teaching attracted him next; and finally he took orders in 'a fit of religious enthusiasm' (December, 1860).[2] But he never seems to have admitted that his ordination vows committed him to any definite theological beliefs beyond 'belief in a Living Being,' about whom certain statements were made in creeds and other formularies, which might or might not be true. At any rate such statements were 'subjects of intellectual credence not of religious faith.'[3] In 1865 he agrees 'with Colenso and his lot as to the destructive part,' while regarding their attempts at reconstruction with sceptical indifference.[4] Nevertheless, on a previous occasion he had expressed regret, in his wildly exaggerative way, that 'the best works of foreign theology, Ewald, Baur, etc., should be totally unknown to England.'[5] Through all these years the primary object of his faith was 'the idea of progress'; and what made Christianity credible was its capacity to meet and satisfy this demand. He sees 'no limit to progress in religion'; and the value of Christianity consists in the historic fact that it has never fixed a limit.

As applied to the Church of England, this theory seems to have broken down both on the practical and on the speculative side. It will be remembered how Julius Hare ascribed Sterling's defection to the unfortunate accident that bad health obliged the poor young man to give up parish work after a few

[1] 'Life and Letters of J. R. Green,' p. 18. [2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 21 and 51.
[3] P. 164. [4] Pp. 154–5. [5] P. 133.

months' trial. Slumming as an antidote to doubt had a much better chance with J. R. Green, who worked hard both as curate and incumbent in various East End parishes—entering far more thoroughly into the ways and wants of the poor than ever Archdeacon Hare himself did at Hurstmonceaux. The result was highly unsatisfactory. Religious education had reached the prostitute class also, and it had not saved them.[1] 'Socially,' he exclaims, 'my work here and good men's work everywhere is simply thrown away. The working-men do *not* go to Church or Chapel; and as they grow in knowledge and self-respect they still stay away. "Missions,"—open Churches —are for all practical purposes a simple failure. Schools half educate the children we do get, and leave untouched the masses that want them most.'[2]

This, however, was not the worst. It is not merely that the clergy have failed hopelessly in their attempts to educate the people, but they are actively resisting and preventing the introduction of a better system. What we want, according to Green, is 'a general system of compulsory National Education,' supported by a national rate. But he thinks that there is no chance whatever of such a change. What hinders it is the Church. 'The clergy know that a thoroughly educated people, and that people without any uneducated class, would be the ruin of their Establishment. And so they fight every point, but with them it is a fight for life.' 'People say—lyingly—that the clergy once withheld the Bible from the people. Now they may boast truly enough that they withhold the spelling-book.'[3]

In February, 1869, Green refers to his clerical position as one 'which thought renders daily more impracticable.' Soon afterwards he resigned his living, ostensibly on grounds of health, which indeed were sufficient to account for the step. But his hopes for progress within the Church still survived, and were only dispelled by the Voysey judgment. He seems to have thought that for a gentleman who openly denied the doctrine of the Trinity to be deprived of his living was an unjust or at least an injudicious restriction on clerical liberty. What disappointed him most was that the 'Liberals'—that is presumably the Broad Church—approved of Mr. Voysey's

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 132. [2] P. 172. [3] Pp. 171–2.

condemnation. It effectively killed his interest in the party. With characteristic exaggeration he makes this rather insignificant episode a reason for throwing over all theologies as effete. 'The fact is,' he tells a friend, 'that, as Francis Lord wrote to-day, there are but two Churches in the world, the Church of the Priest and the Church of the Schoolmaster; the Church of Dogma and the Church of Science. Bodies like the Church of England may try to conciliate the two movements—at least portions of them may—but every day makes the task more impossible. One may ground one's "religion"—the moral tie that is that binds our life into unity of action and purpose—on "faith" or on "fact"—on the outer teaching of Church or Bible or Sect, or on the inner teaching of experiment and knowledge. But it is impossible to combine the two.' And he goes on to ask the lady to whom he is writing has she read Darwin's new book on Man and his Origin (March, 1871).[1]

A little later still (December, 1871), writing to the lady who is now Mrs. Humphry Ward, he describes his life as 'without any real faith in a hereafter.'

At the beginning of 1874, in view of the approaching elections, Green rather welcomes the prospect of a Liberal defeat as likely to bring on an agitation for Disestablishment. The Ritualists have convinced him of its necessity. He 'can't abide paying money to make England papist.'[2]

Green's 'Short History of the English People' appeared at the end of the same year, 1874. Neither this nor any other of his publications contains any expression of theological unbelief. But the opening of his ninth chapter describes modern England as 'an England whose chief forces are industry and science, the love of popular freedom and of law, an England which presses steadily forward to a larger social justice and equality, and which tends more and more to bring every custom and tradition, religious, intellectual, and political, to the test of pure reason.'[3] We now know from his privately expressed opinions how much those pregnant phrases imply. Tested by pure reason, which is the sole test admissible, no form of Christianity, according to Green, can be reconciled with science and social justice. Roman Catholicism is actively opposed to the chief forces of modern

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 292. [2] P. 378.
[3] 'Short History of the English People,' p. 605 (ed. of 1889).

English civilisation, and the Church of England is rapidly tending to place herself on the same side with Rome. Her clergy are ignorant of Biblical criticism, impotent for good, and the worst enemies of a genuine national education. Darwin's 'Descent of Man' contains the true gospel of our age, and the secular schoolmaster is its true evangelist.

What the invalid historian wrote in private to a few confidential friends was soon to be proclaimed from the house-tops by the more outspoken champions to whose keeping the cause of pure reason remained henceforth committed. Green's essentially historical way of looking at contemporary life and thought enables us to understand, better than any utterances of theirs, the extraordinary bitterness with which the war of opinion was conducted in the middle seventies. In the eyes of rationalism the authorised exponents of religion not merely taught what was false, but were actively opposed to the teaching of truth. Not content with disseminating error, they were carrying on the evil work at the expense of those who repudiated it, under the name of grants from the rates or from the exchequer. Such proceedings would have been bad enough had the clerical propaganda been limited to the dogmatic standards against which Bentham had raised his voice half a century before, or the Biblical history which at a still earlier period had been exhibited in its falsity by Paine. They became insufferable when a large and increasing number of the clergy showed themselves bent on tearing up the Reformation settlement, with a view to reviving the sacerdotalism and superstition of mediaeval Christianity. And this was being done at a time when science was rapidly pushing forward in an exactly opposite direction, reconstructing the past history of mankind on lines utterly subversive not only of Biblical authenticity, but also of the whole dogmatic theory in accordance with which Biblical history had hitherto been interpreted; while criticism was simultaneously reducing the fundamental documents of 'revealed religion' to a heap of disjointed fragments, some of them manifestly fabricated in the interests of an unscrupulous priesthood.

It was not the fault of the Roman hierarchs if any Englishmen were so deluded as to imagine that more latitude of

scientific opinion prevailed in the Church which was governed by Pius IX. than in the Church which was governed by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, or for that matter, in any body of Protestant Dissenters. Dr. Newman passed for being the most enlightened and philosophic of Catholic theologians. But the 'Grammar of Assent' had come most opportunely to show that what he taught in the Birmingham Oratory embodied what was most offensive to the modern spirit in his deliverances, forty years earlier, from the pulpit of St. Mary's. And the ecclesiastical authorities who gave their official sanction to such criticism of Darwin as Dr. Laing's were little likely to encourage the teaching of evolution, or indeed of any physical science, in the universities under their control. A memorial dated November, 1873, and addressed by seventy students and ex-students of the Catholic University of Ireland to its Episcopal Board, bears striking witness to their obscurantist policy. It 'sets forth the extraordinary fact that the lecture list for the faculty of science, published a month before they wrote, did not contain the name of a single Professor of the Physical or Natural Sciences.' And it draws attention to the fact that the 'name of no Irish Catholic is known in connexion with the physical and natural sciences.' 'Precisely the same complaint,' observes Tyndall, the authority to whom I owe the information, 'has been made with respect to the Catholics of Germany.' A German writer, apparently a Catholic, is quoted as supplying the sufficiently obvious explanation that this deficiency is due to 'the pressure exercised for centuries by the Jesuitical system, which has crushed out of Catholics every tendency to free mental productiveness.'[1]

In response, as Tyndall thinks, to the Irish memorialists' appeal, a Roman Catholic University was founded at Kensington in 1874, where physical science was taught. The University was not long-lived, nor, in one way, was the experiment particularly encouraging. Among the scientific professors were Richard Proctor, the astronomer, and St. George Mivart, the biologist. Both embraced the theory of evolution. Proctor soon afterwards became an agnostic and a vehement assailant of all Christian theology. Mivart, while ostensibly remaining within the Church, indulged in such latitude of speculation—

[1] 'Fragments of Science,' Vol. II., pp. 213–6.

pushed to the extent of denying the Virgin-birth—as to draw down on himself a sentence of excommunication, still unremoved at the time of his death. But this is to anticipate events still a quarter of a century distant. I have said enough to explain with what enemies rationalism had now to deal. For some time its advocates were engaged not so much in destroying an abstractedly false system of belief, as in upholding modern science and civilisation against the organised hostility of living men appealing to the interests and passions of human beings in all classes and both sexes, more ignorant and more emotional than themselves.

Our next chapter will be occupied with an account of the controversial literature, unexampled in English history for copiousness, ardour, eloquence, and outspoken hostility to all theological belief, which embodied the reply of rationalism to the claims of the Syllabus and of the Vatican decrees.

CHAPTER XVIII

RATIONALISM AND THE ANTI-CLERICAL MOVEMENT

In the course of this narrative I have occasionally drawn attention to what seems the existence of an inverse ratio between the prevalence of Liberalism in English politics and the prevalence of rationalism in English thought. One might almost imagine that only a fixed fund of energy was available for innovation or destruction, and that the amount applied to the abolition of privilege counted as a deduction from what could be spared for the criticism of superstition. A more probable explanation, however, will be found in the general uninterestingness of public affairs under a Tory administration, which leaves more leisure for the consideration of speculative problems, and therefore by implication of the theological issues involved in their solution. However this may be, it is certain that the great rationalistic movement of the seventies coincided with a Conservative reaction extending over the same period, and that it came to a temporary close when an opposite tide of political feeling began to set in.

It would be a mistake to measure the balance of political opinion in the country by the mere fact, which is often a mere accident, of the title given to the political party then in power. Dwindling majorities in the House of Commons and defeats at bye-elections announce, as a rule, long beforehand what will happen on an appeal to the whole electorate; while, with us at least, the government is not slow to alter its policy in obedience to the changes of public opinion. Thus it happened that the general election of 1874 merely accentuated a Conservative reaction dating from nearly three years earlier; while the same reaction came to an end almost exactly as long before the overwhelming Liberal victory of 1880.

According to a very shrewd political observer—no other, I believe, than the late Lord Salisbury—what first turned popular feeling against the Gladstonian government was the horror excited by the Paris Commune, supposed as it was to represent the inevitable outcome of unbridled democracy. But the government had itself begun to betray reactionary tendencies a whole year before, when the Commune was as yet undreamed of, in those provisions of the Education Act already described as a contributory cause of the anti-clerical movement. At the same time the events in Paris helped no doubt to accelerate this retrograde movement, besides strengthening the aggressive tendencies of clericalism, and thus indirectly provoking a more violent protest on the side of freethought. Moreover the Communards, like their predecessors the terrorists of the great Revolution, had some sympathisers among the leaders of advanced thought in England, notably J. R. Green and Mr. Frederic Harrison, on whom they may have exercised a directly stimulating influence; while others, less in sympathy with their social aims, may have felt emboldened to declare themselves more openly about religion by the spectacle of such uncompromising iconoclasm as that which distinguished those rebels against all authority on the banks of the Seine.

It is possible that the poet of 'Songs before Sunrise' was one of those on whom the Commune exercised this sort of general stimulation; for, as a disciple of Mazzini, Mr. Swinburne must have been opposed to the more characteristic principles of its leaders. At any rate his anti-theistic lyrics, published for the first time at this crisis, illustrate in an extreme form the spirit of fierce defiance which the Ritualists in their leanings towards Rome, and Rome in her alliance with political reaction, had contrived to provoke. As such, it may have occurred to some readers that 'Songs before Sunrise' might more fitly have been noticed in the present connexion than in a former chapter, where they have found a place among other evidences of the influence exercised by rationalism on contemporary literature. When we divide up the history of opinion into periods, the demarcating lines remain somewhat arbitrary and fluctuating; and it occasionally happens that a particular phenomenon may, with almost equal reason, be placed on either side of the boundary. In the present instance

it has seemed to me that the advantage of classing Mr. Swinburne's most extreme work with his earlier references to religion, as well as with the less violent utterances of other English poets, more than makes up for the slight anticipation on a more revolutionary period necessitated by dealing with it in the chapter where it has already been considered. It is as well also to be occasionally reminded that systematisation, when taken very seriously, is apt to degenerate into pedantry; and that such schematic arrangements as, for example, those adopted in the present work are but distantly related to scientific method, and need no better defence than that they help the student to find his way with more ease through a series of indistinct and complicated events.

Contenting ourselves then with this passing reference to one who will always remain more remarkable for his extraordinary literary genius than for the audacity of his religious opinions, we pass on to a writer more truly symptomatic of the new era, a writer in whom the relations are reversed, in whom the daring of what he said counted for incomparably more than the power—although that was not small—with which he said it. This stormy petrel of the advancing hurricane was Winwood Reade, nephew of the famous novelist, Charles Reade, a gifted, ambitious, adventurous young man, who won as a dauntless African explorer the reputation that his books at first failed to achieve. Literary success, when it came, came too late. The work by which his name still lives—if it lives at all, 'The Martyrdom of Man,' appeared in 1872, three years before his death; it reached a third edition in 1876, and an eighth edition in 1884. He seems to have developed freethinking opinions at an early age; and what was especially significant in those times, his hostility was particularly directed against Catholicism. His African experiences came to interest him in more primitive faiths. This led to a wide study of the early history of mankind, and of origins generally, as then understood. 'The Martyrdom of Man' is a sketch of universal history, considered from the religious point of view. It has been called atheistic; but Reade's opinions would more truly be described as a reproduction on the positive side of Herbert Spencer's creed, with the theistic element a little accentuated. That transcendent superiority of the Unknowable to a divine Personality which

Spencer suggested as a possibility, or something more, is here dogmatically affirmed with neo-Platonic conviction. 'The Supreme Power,' says Reade, 'is not a Mind, but something higher than a Mind; not a Force, but something higher than a Force; not a Being, but something higher than a Being; something for which we have no words, something for which we have no ideas.'[1] It is an 'Unknown God,' 'supreme and mysterious.'[2] Yet we know—presumably on Herbert Spencer's authority—that it exists, that by it 'the universe has been created;' that it is One; that prayer to it would be profanity.[3]

Spencer implicitly excluded Christianity from his scheme of reconciliation, without, however, uttering a word against it. His disciple detests and makes no terms with it. It is not only 'false,' but 'a superstition, and ought to be destroyed.' 'God-worship is idolatry. Prayer is useless. The soul is not immortal. There are no rewards and punishments in a future state.'[4] Spencer, too, had reluctantly accepted this last negation, which follows with logical necessity from his principles, but long kept it veiled. Nor must it be imagined that Winwood Reade felt no pain in tearing the veil away. The immortality of the soul, he admits, is 'a sweet and charming illusion;'[5] but the 'Martyrdom of Man' consists precisely in renouncing it for truth's sake.

Reade must have found many sympathisers, to judge by the long popularity of his book. But the increasing vogue of rationalism is better attested by the extent to which it permeated the periodical literature of England all through this decade. In the sixties what were called advanced views had no regular organ but the 'Westminster Review,' now rather deteriorated in quality, and presumably less read than in the palmy days of Marian Evans's editorship. The 'National Review,' never radical in its theology, and distinctly more conservative in its last phase, had come to an end in 1864. Its place as an organ of high culture was taken next year by the 'Fortnightly Review,' at first a very ambitious enterprise, whose founders meant their journal to figure as an English equivalent to the 'Revue des Deux Mondes.' In speculation it did not,

[1] 'Martyrdom of Man,' p. 520. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 542.
[3] *Ibid.* [4] P. 522. [5] P. 543.

however, exhibit the breadth which at that time so honourably distinguished the great French journal. G. H. Lewes, its first editor, was apparently himself without any theological belief;[1] but his fear of offending public opinion was extreme, and under his management nothing going beyond Broad Church limits was suffered to appear. In 1867 the review was reorganised, and received a fresh start under the more competent guidance of Mr. John Morley. At that time the new editor was probably as far gone in negation as he afterwards proclaimed himself to be; but for some years the 'Fortnightly' continued not less reticent about the ultimate questions of theology than before. This is the more remarkable as all the leading positivists were numbered among its contributors; and Mr. Morley himself, though unattached to the school, was evidently imbued with the philosophy of Comte and Mill. But at that time positivism, true to its name, held aloof from mere negation, as indeed did nearly all the rising intellects of the age.

Reconstruction was no doubt desirable; but as represented by a series of rather unexciting studies on social subjects—and these were what constituted the speciality of the 'Fortnightly'—it failed to interest the general reader. Rationalists, at any rate, must have found more exhilarating fare in the columns of 'Fraser's Magazine,' at that time edited by J. A. Froude, whose lifelong and passionate hatred for clericalism had been roused to fresh activity by the Ritualist and Ultramontane movements already described. In his warfare against the latter he received powerful support from a younger writer, Fitzjames Stephen. This most vigorous of English critics had inherited from the Clapham School, to which his father belonged, a full share of the old Evangelical hatred for Rome, while gradually coming to discard the dogmas that Evangelicalism held in common with Newman and Manning. These minor conflicts kept reason as a destructive instrument bright and sharp for the more terrible uses still in reserve.

No periodical seemed less likely to let its pages be used as a vehicle for the expression of religious radicalism than the 'Cornhill Magazine.' Yet it was there that Matthew Arnold's

[1] Auguste Comte refers to Lewes's confession of theism as 'son adhésion au plus méprisable de tous les systèmes d'hypocrisie théologique' ('Politique Positive,' Tome IV., p. 540).

'St. Paul' and his 'Literature and Dogma' first appeared. The value of these remarkable works as contributions to religious reconstruction has already been considered. In the present connexion the important thing to notice is that whatever Arnold's theory of religion may be worth, it amounted, like Schleiermacher's Discourses on the same subject, to a complete breach with all his countrymen's religious beliefs, to a complete concession of all that rationalism demanded. Yet one does not hear that any scandal or loss was occasioned by its publication in the 'Cornhill Magazine.'

In these circumstances it seemed remarkable that the 'Fortnightly' should have been so long closed, as it practically was, to radical criticism on theology. Considering the editor's well-known fearlessness, we must suppose that Mill's reticence and Comte's rather sentimental horror of negation were the determining factors in his policy. In spite also of his contempt for Lecky, Mr. Morley seems to have fully adopted Lecky's theory of the intellectual atmosphere. Years afterwards, when battle was engaged along the whole line, he could still refer to 'the history of opinion' as showing 'that unfounded beliefs are gradually discarded less in consequence of the direct rationalistic attack made upon them than as a result of the prevailing habits of thought. Men surrender a superstition because they have acquired in other regions a way of thinking which silently dissolves the superstition.'[1] It must also be remembered that Mr. Morley is and has ever been before all things a politician. Now, as I have had occasion to point out before, the English Whig and Radical leaders, while generally freethinkers, have habitually kept their opinions to themselves, sometimes even risking the charge of hypocrisy in order not to lose the support of Evangelical and Nonconformist voters.

Occasionally, however, a volcanic jet came through the mask of snow. It must have given a shock of surprise to more than one reader when, in relating Condorcet's death, Mr. Morley used the needlessly distressing phrase, 'so . . . this high spirit was overtaken by annihilation.'[2] Not long afterwards a prime object of himself and his friends is specified as being 'to disband

[1] 'Fortnightly Review,' Vol. XVI., p. 518 (Article on 'Supernatural Religion').

[2] 'Fortnightly Review,' Jan., 1870; 'Critical Miscellanies,' Vol. II., p. 210.

that sinister clerical army of 28000 men in masks.'[1] Such language would imply that what the clergy taught was so absurd that they could not be supposed to believe it themselves. Only the touch of practical interests was needed to bring this pent-up rage in full volume to the surface. Nor was it long before the psychological moment arrived.

It has been already explained how the Education Act of 1870 blew the smouldering anti-clerical feeling into a flame by securing additional endowments for denominational schools; and how J. R. Green, himself a clergyman, was driven into a hostile attitude towards his Church by what he conceived to be its systematic opposition to the spread of knowledge. Educational difficulties were also largely responsible for a literary event which caused some stir a little later. This was the publication in 1872 of a book called 'Christian Theology and Modern Scepticism.' Its author, the Duke of Somerset, was not only a great noble but a veteran Whig statesman who had held office as First Lord of the Admiralty from 1859 to 1866. By way of relief from deep domestic affliction he had plunged into the study of rationalistic literature, the results of which he embodied in the little volume above named. It seems probable that many other persons have gone through a similar course of reading, and have come to the same conclusions without feeling any call to lay them before the public, even when accidental circumstances would have ensured them a number of readers not otherwise interested in such subjects. The Duke had some reputation to lose and none to gain; nor in fact does he seem to have been actuated by literary vanity. Having conscientiously satisfied himself that historical Christianity was not founded on fact, he took the world into his confidence for reasons briefly but clearly set forth in his prefatory and concluding observations. Religious controversies, instead of dying out, are becoming an increasing element of political disturbance. The Roman Catholic clergy have grown more violent. The Church of England distracts us with her internal disputes. 'The Nonconformists threaten to upset everything from the village school to the cabinet, unless they are allowed to have their own way.' There would be an end to such civil

[1] *Op. cit.*, Oct., 1870, p. 480 (Vol. VIII., New Series).

commotions if all English Protestants, to begin with, would sink their insoluble differences in the pious adoration of one Supreme intelligence. The clergy will then have the education of the people in their own hands, because the distinction between religious and secular instruction will have ceased to exist. As usual, half a century is the time allowed for this happy consummation to be realised.[1]

Men of the world sometimes betray an ignorance of the real world which no cloistered student can approach. But if the Duke of Somerset could see no further into futurity than most of his order, he may still be quoted as a credible witness to the alarm raised among the friends of education by sectarian animosities, and to their belief that the time had come for a reversal of Horace Walpole's system, and for some very plain speaking on the part of all sensible men about the religion of those who had no sense.

When a veteran Whig statesman was bringing modern scepticism into the field against Christian theology, an ardent young Radical could not be expected to hold his hand any longer. In 1873 Mr. Morley began a series of articles in the 'Fortnightly Review,' passionately pleading the cause of secular education; at the same time inserting articles by Leslie Stephen and Francis Newman, dealing with popular Christianity from the purely destructive side. What seems most remarkable about the plan of campaign, whether resulting from deliberate concert or from an unconscious sense of the situation's exigencies, is the tendency shown by both Stephen and Newman to make war on all intermediate shades of opinion, whether, as with Maurice, they took the form of a mystical theology without the repulsive features of the old orthodoxy, or, as with Rathbone Greg, the form of a nominal Christianity, based on love and reverence for the person of its Founder. And Francis Newman more particularly accentuates the needs of the crisis when, in words still worth listening to, he reminds us that while 'positive results, *if true*, are excellent . . . so' also 'are negative results, *if true*. A system of national religion which sustains and instils into youthful minds tenets intrinsically false, *after* the reason and conscience of the well-informed have ripened for the rejection

[1] 'Christian Theology and Modern Scepticism,' pp. v.–vi., 148, and 178–9.

of the falsehood, is an enormous evil. . . . The question must always be, not whether [the disputants'] argument be positive or negative, but whether it is TRUE.'[1]

I know not whether the defeat of political Liberalism at the general election of 1874 had any immediate connexion with the change of tone in the 'Fortnightly Review.' At any rate, after that catastrophe it became still more marked; and experience would lead us to expect that the check given to the reforming spirit in Parliament should act as a stimulus on the same spirit in the region of speculation. Certain it is that the July number of that year contains a chapter on 'Religious Conformity,' forming part of a work on 'Compromise' from the editor's own pen, in which Mr. Morley gives his opinion of the popular creed, not indeed with greater frankness, but with greater fulness than ever before. 'Those who agree with him,' he explains, 'are not sceptics. They positively, absolutely, and without reserve, reject as false the whole system of objective propositions which make up the popular belief of the day, in one and all of its theological expressions. They look upon that system as mischievous in its consequences to society, for many reasons—among others because it tends to divert and misdirect the most energetic faculties of human nature.'[2] There are 'portentous differences between those who admit a supernatural revelation and those who deny it.'[3] Death, as we have seen, means annihilation. As regards the ultimate question of existence, the writer's attitude, here and elsewhere, seems to be strictly agnostic. It was determined, as we know, by combining the historical criticism of Greg's 'Creed of Christendom' with the metaphysical criticism of Mansel's Bampton Lectures. Mr. Morley has reached the same stage as Herbert Spencer, whose phrase about a 'Power of which the nature remains for ever inconceivable,' he elsewhere quotes with approval.[4] 'None of the attributes of the Creator can ever be grasped by the finite intelligence of man.'[5] A divine personality is rejected more

[1] 'Fortnightly Review,' Vol. XIV., pp. 741–2.

[2] Reprinted in the volume 'On Compromise,' pp. 160–1.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

[4] 'Fortnightly Review,' Vol. XVII., p. 124 (Article on Mill's 'Three Essays on Religion').

[5] 'On Compromise,' p. 157.

decisively than it was rejected by Matthew Arnold. It is 'only a finer version of the rude anthropomorphism of the fetishist;' while an impersonal 'Mind or Will busying itself over the Kosmos is . . . utterly unmeaning.'[1] And to this unknowable Power he will not give the name of God.[2]

Mr. Morley refers to Matthew Arnold as 'an eminent divine not in holy orders.'[3] There seems to be a touch of irony about the phrase. Probably the glorification of the Bible in 'Literature and Dogma' struck him as a little artificial. But he holds the same conviction as Arnold, that religion, apart from belief in the supernatural, is a most valuable and even indispensable element in life. Admitting that women cannot be happy without a religion, he adds, 'nor men either.'[4] I am not aware that the nature of the ultimately safe and saving faith has ever been set forth in any of this author's numerous books and articles; but there are hints that, unlike Arnold's, it will be dissociated from ethics.

A leading object of the work on 'Compromise' was to enforce, as against the flabbiness of contemporary opinion, the desirability of speaking out plainly about religious belief. It is addressed to those who, having ceased to believe themselves, keep back their unbelief, either to avoid giving pain, or because they think the old doctrines useful guides to people in a less advanced stage of culture. A variety of excellent reasons are advanced in opposition to this policy, a policy which even now, thirty years later, would still find numerous supporters. But, as may be supposed after what has been said about the political situation in the early seventies, anti-clerical considerations occupy the foremost place. Alike in Protestant and Catholic churches, 'the pulpit is now the home of fervid controversy and often exacerbated declamation in favour of ancient dogma and against modern science.'[5] And 'these professional upholders of dogmatic systems are also possessed of a vast social influence in questions that naturally belong to another sphere.[6] In surrendering the common people . . . to organised priesthoods for religious purposes, you would be inevitably including a vast number of other purposes in the self-same destination.'[7]

[1] 'Fortnightly Review,' *loc. cit.*
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 128.
[3] 'On Compromise,' p. 158.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 176.
[5] P. 53.
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] P. 55.

Holding such opinions as these, Mr. Morley quite consistently turned the 'Fortnightly Review' into an organ for their active propagation. His own share chiefly consisted in a series of essays on the revolutionary literature of the French eighteenth century, as represented by Voltaire, Rousseau, and the Encyclopaedists, of whom the last at any rate were not remarkable for compromising with irrational theologies. In particular D'Holbach's atheistic 'Système de la Nature' receives a most sympathetic treatment, contrasting singularly with Buckle's horror-stricken reference to the same work twenty years earlier. And in the midst of his multifarious labours the controversialist editor found time to rebuke the backsliding in theological matters of his own favourite teacher, J. S. Mill, whose 'Three Essays on Religion' first appeared in the eventful year 1874.

Mill's Essays caused much less excitement than another work of equally pronounced rationalistic tendencies anonymously published at the same time under the title of 'Supernatural Religion,' consisting of two large volumes, followed three years afterwards by a third. The author, who still lives, long kept his name a secret. He is now known to be Mr. Walter Cassels, formerly member of the Legislative Council of Bombay. His performance adds one more illustration to the long list of distinguished amateurs who have contributed so much to English literature and science; for Mr. Cassels, though possessing immense erudition, is not a trained scholar, and has sometimes laid himself open to the corrections of more accurately informed critics. His book was written to show that the Christian religion is not a miraculous revelation; and the method employed consists in proving that the miracles adduced in attestation of its claims to that character are incredible in themselves, and are not authenticated by any trustworthy evidence.

In order to fix the position of the author more clearly we must carefully distinguish it from that of others who have preceded or followed him in the same general line of attack. There are writers, Charles Hennell for instance, who have more or less successfully explained Christianity, like any other religion of admittedly human origin, as the natural and inevitable result of certain historical antecedents. Others again,

like Strauss, confining themselves to the Biblical miracles, have offered various theories to explain how such stories could come to be believed otherwise than by the actual occurrence of the events related. A third party, represented by Paine, direct their criticisms against the contents of the alleged revelation, urging that its dogmatic assumptions are irreconcilable with the character of a perfect Being. Finally there are those of whom Matthew Arnold was one, who, denying that the existence of such a Being can be satisfactorily established, summarily dismiss the whole system in which it is presupposed. Of course two or more of these various points of view may be combined in a single attack, and such combinations are common enough in rationalistic literature. They sustain and diversify the study of Christian evidences on the negative side, but have the disadvantage of being open to a counter-attack on the apologetic side. To employ them is to run the risk of being charged with arbitrary reconstruction of history, with fanciful theories, and baseless assumptions. In this way the real point at issue is disguised; and miracles are supposed to have been made credible, because all the secrets of human credulity have not been fathomed.

'Supernatural Religion' is not liable to any such reproaches. Its author keeps carefully to the work of demolition, without troubling himself to explain how the edifice he is battering down was built up. He neither discusses the origin of Christianity, nor speculates about what suggested the stories with which its early history has been adorned. Contending solely that miracles neither did nor could happen, he devotes nearly half a volume to the *a priori* argument against their abstract possibility, and the rest of the work to discrediting the historical value of the New Testament books commonly quoted as the evidence of eye-witnesses or contemporaries to the miracles of Jesus and of his immediate disciples. In this second branch of the enquiry the old objection derived from discrepancies between the various narratives is duly emphasised; but far more space goes to the literary argument, to the absence of such early references in writers of known date as would prove our canonical Gospels to be the work of competent authorities for the events they record. Here the author takes rank as an original enquirer; and like Colenso, he won the right to be heard where

his rationalist predecessors met with little attention, because they were supposed to be merely popularising the results, often unsound, of Continental criticism. What Mr. Cassels did in this way has been so well summed up by Matthew Arnold—certainly not a very favourable judge—that I cannot do better than quote the illustrious critic's own words:

'He seems to have looked out and brought together, to the best of his powers, every extant passage in which, between the year 70 and the year 170 of our era a writer might be supposed to be quoting one of our Four Gospels. And it turns out that there is constantly the same sort of variation from our Gospels, a variation inexplicable in men quoting from a real Canon, and quite unlike what is found in men quoting from our Four Gospels later. It may be said that the Old Testament too is often quoted loosely. True; but it is also quoted exactly; and long passages of it are thus quoted. It would be nothing if our canonical gospels were often quoted loosely, if long passages from them, or if passages, say, of two or three verses were sometimes quoted exactly. But from writers before Irenaeus not one such passage from our canonical Gospels can be produced so quoted. And the author of "Supernatural Religion," by bringing all the alleged quotations forward, has proved it. . . . We call him a learned and exact writer from the diligence and accuracy with which he has conducted this investigation. His construing of Greek and Latin may leave something to be desired. His rejection of evidence which does not suit his purpose makes him . . . an untrustworthy guide. . . . But his point he has proved. No fineness of accomplishment, no pursuit of the author into side-issues, no discrediting of him in these, will avail to shake his establishment of his main position, where the facts are for him and he has collected them with pertinacious industry and completeness.'[1]

[1] 'God and the Bible,' pp. 222–5. I venture to think that, on this point, Matthew Arnold's opinion carries more weight than the opinion of Mr. Herbert Paul, who tells us that 'Lightfoot convicted the author of Supernatural Religion of so many mistakes that the value of the book was almost destroyed' ('History of Modern England,' Vol. III., p. 425). It is fortunate for Mr. Paul that the value of an important work is not destroyed by incidental blunders, however gross. On this same page he says that 'Mr. Henry Sidgwick applied the historic process of investigation to moral philosophy in his Methods of Ethics.' For a random statement this is peculiarly unlucky. Sidgwick

When Arnold censures our author for rejecting 'evidence which does not suit his purpose,' he says, I believe, no more than what Dr. Lightfoot had already made good. But this, according to him, is a side-issue, leaving the main point unaffected. What has been proved, moreover, is in his opinion less important than most people believed. In this he seems to have been right. A general agreement now prevails among critics that whatever may have been the date when the Synoptic Gospels took final shape, they incorporate written material dating from not long after the siege of Jerusalem, and that the Fourth Gospel, although certainly not by the Apostle John, and otherwise of little historical value, was written rather early in the second century. But to put the Gospels no higher up than this is so utterly to ruin their authority as attestations of miraculous events that the deduction from the extreme contentions of 'Supernatural Religion' remains of comparatively little consequence. Books like this really tell on public opinion by re-editing, so to speak, the arguments of older rationalists, which have in fact never been answered, but for whose extinction the word of the official apologists is apt to be taken as a sufficient warrant.

Thus, then, the labours of his predecessors supplied Mr. Cassels with a strong case against the New Testament Canon as evidence for the supernatural; and he made that case somewhat stronger by his new method of comparing the Gospel-text as we have it with the references in patristic literature; but he overstated and so injured his case by an arbitrary system of disauthenticating inconvenient evidence. His *a priori* argument against miracles errs in the same way by overstatement—a fault not peculiar to this writer. Not content with showing that miracles are highly improbable, he will have it that they are impossible, quoting Mill to the effect that what contradicts a complete induction is incredible. What we call laws of nature are established by a complete induction; and these, no doubt, would not be laws if they could be violated. But, as Matthew Arnold justly observes, 'no such law of nature as Mill describes has been or can be established against the Christian

notoriously held aloof from the historic method; and there is no trace of its employment in the work named, which is developed on purely dialectical lines.

miracles;'[1] and we have seen that this was Mill's opinion also, although personally he disbelieved in miracles. Their possibility, for any particular reasoner, depends very much on his belief about God. On this point Mr. Cassels is not so clear as could be wished. His theological expressions are ordinarily those of commonplace theism. We hear about a 'Supreme Being' who 'governs the universe,' a 'good providence,' who 'controls our slightest actions,' who is 'beneficent,' 'wise,' 'merciful,' etc.;[2]—language justly characterised by Matthew Arnold as 'a string of platitudes.'[3] All this might be supposed to imply the existence of a personal Deity. Such a Deity is assumed by Dr. Mozley, whose defence of miracles the first part of 'Supernatural Religion' keeps throughout in view, with the admission on his part that, while recommending itself to reason, this assumption is derived from revelation. Of course Mozley gives away his case completely by such an admission; and so far as he is concerned, the whole argument resolves itself into a vicious circle. Certain credentials are produced to prove the fact of a revelation, and at the same time it is acknowledged that without the revelation the credentials would be incredible. Now, had Mr. Cassels been writing merely as a controversialist, merely as one concerned to lay bare the fallacies of his opponent, he need only have noted Mozley's admission without expressing his own opinion as to its objective necessity. But he is not content to take up such a guarded attitude; he evidently agrees that for the divine personality there is no proof but that very revelation which he rejects. And as if to remove the last suspicion of ambiguity, he points out the very same fallacy in Mansel's theology, with the same frank rejection, for his own part, of its fundamental assumption. 'The impossibility,' he contends, 'of conceiving God as He is, which is rightly insisted upon, instead of being a reason for assuming His personality . . . totally excludes such an assumption.'[4]

There is no difficulty in tracing this confusion back to its source. It arises from Herbert Spencer's pretended reconciliation of religion with science. We have here in a form at once

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 44.
[2] 'Supernatural Religion,' Vol. II., p. 492.
[3] 'God and the Bible,' p. 15.
[4] 'Supernatural Religion,' Vol. I., p. 73.

more meagre and more clumsy the same blend of theism, pantheism, and agnosticism that infests the introduction to 'First Principles,' only with the theistic element brought out in bolder relief.

At the same time the weakness of the author's metaphysics must not interfere with our appreciation of the good work done in the historical chapters of his general argument against miracles. Here it is well shown that if in one way miracles transgress the order of nature, in another way they re-enter it as objects of belief,[1] being the inevitable products of ignorance and superstition. So interpreted, the Gospel miracles take their place in a vast continuous current, particularly characterising periods of religious excitement, and emerging whenever the conditions of their presentation are fulfilled.

'Supernatural Religion' reached a second edition a few months after its publication, and a sixth edition five years later, in 1879. That such a ponderous and expensive work should sell so well strikingly illustrates the warm interest of the seventies in religious controversy of the freest kind, and also their power of serious and sustained application.

But neither then nor at any other time has English rationalism been represented by another such huge iron-clad as this. With so many periodicals thrown open to freethinking contributors, the small torpedo-craft of journalism naturally furnished the largest and most effective contingent to its forces. Nor as a rule did miracles and Biblical criticism receive much attention for several years to come. It was felt that to examine the problems connected with historical religion from the negative side was superfluous if the metaphysical assumptions on which historical belief rested could be successfully impugned. Thus the controversy passed from the hands of scholars to the hands of men of science to such an extent that for a long time to come the cause of rationalism became identified in popular opinion with the methods and results of physical research.

A period of plain speaking now began which must have satisfied Mr. Morley's utmost requirements. Seven weeks from the appearance of his chapter on 'Religious Conformity' Professor Tyndall delivered his famous Belfast Address before the

[1] *Credita*, not *credenda*.

British Association. It gives a brilliant sketch of the rise and progress of that philosophy which explains physical events by mechanical or material causes as distinguished from spiritual causes, beginning with Democritus and coming down to the speaker's own times. More particularly the atomic theory, the Darwinian theory, and Herbert Spencer's psychology of inherited mental forms, are lucidly expounded and placed in line with the happy conjectures of Greek thought, with the further developments of Arabian thought, with the more daring speculations of the Renaissance, with all that the Church had condemned during the dark period of its European ascendency. Nor is this enough. Passing beyond the period of organic evolution, as the completion of natural law we are led on to recognise the necessary derivation of the first beginnings of life from the spontaneous combination of its inorganic elements. At no point can supernatural interference with the causal chain be permitted. 'We claim, and we shall wrest from theology, the entire domain of cosmological theory.'[1] 'I discern in matter,' exclaims the speaker, 'the promise and potency of all terrestrial life.'[2] Feeling must not be allowed to intrude on the domain of knowledge. 'We should resist at all hazards the attempts made in the past, and now repeated, to found upon this elemental bias of man's nature a system which should exercise despotic sway over his intellect. . . . We fought and won our battle even in the Middle Ages; should we doubt the issue of another conflict with our broken foe?'[3]

Both in the Belfast Address and elsewhere Tyndall was careful to repudiate the charge of materialism. A materialist claims absolute knowledge, knowledge of things in themselves. But like his friends and intellectual comrades, Huxley and Spencer, the illustrious physicist disclaimed all such knowledge. States of consciousness and molecular movements are alike mere phenomena, symbols of a hidden reality. Science has a right to say that 'thought, as exercised by us, has its correlative in the physics of the brain.'[4] But the association, however intimate, remains unexplained and, in the present state of our faculties, inexplicable. Such subtle distinctions, however, are beyond the comprehension of the man in the

[1] 'Fragments of Science,' Vol. II., p. 199.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 193. [3] Pp. 198–9. [4] P. 87.

street, for whom Tyndall and his school were then, and have ever since continued to be, unqualified materialists. Perhaps the most highly instructed of their theological opponents were equally stupid; at any rate, from whatever cause, they fell into the same error. To them any negation of their religious beliefs, whether idealist or materialist, was equally offensive; and the inducement must have been strong to fasten on it the most offensive nickname they could find.

The Belfast Address raised a storm of opprobrium, and was publicly denounced in a manifesto issued by the Roman Catholic hierarchs of Ireland. They had better have let it alone. Tyndall retorted with an 'Apology,' in which the anti-clerical note is still more distinctly sounded than in the Address itself. 'Looking,' he exclaims, 'at what I must regard as the extravagances of the religious world; at the very inadequate and foolish notions entertained by the majority of our authorised religious teachers; at the waste of energy on the part of good men over things unworthy, if I may say it without discourtesy, of the attention of enlightened heathens; the fight about the fripperies of Ritualism, and the verbal quibbles of the Athanasian Creed; the forcing on the public view of the Montigny Pilgrimages; the dating of historic epochs from the definition of the Immaculate Conception; the proclamation of the Divine Glories of the Sacred Heart—standing in the midst of these chimeras, which astound all thinking men, it did not appear to me extravagant to claim tolerance for an hour and a half for the statement of more reasonable views.'[1] And he proceeds to show by facts, some of which have been mentioned at the end of the preceding chapter, how blighting is the influence of the Catholic Church on the culture of physical science.

A paper by Professor Huxley on 'Animal Automatism,' read before the same meeting of the British Association that had been inaugurated by Tyndall's Address, and subsequently printed in one of the autumn numbers of the 'Fortnightly Review' for 1874, caused a still greater sensation in the philosophical world. Descartes and his followers had taught that all animals, with the exception of man, were automata in the most absolute sense of the word—that is to say, nothing more than exceedingly complicated mechanisms, whose actions, although

[1] 'Fragments of Science,' Vol. II., p. 209.

performed with all the outward symptoms of pleasure and pain, are nevertheless unaccompanied by the slightest trace of consciousness. This hypothesis, strange as it may seem, is not without some support from facts in the physiological history of the lower animals and even of man. 'If by some accident a man's spinal cord is divided his limbs are paralysed, so far as his volition is concerned, below the point of injury,' and become insensible to treatment which, before the lesion took place, would have caused him acute pain. 'But if the soles of his feet were tickled, the legs would be drawn up just as vigorously as they would have been before the injury.'[1] And a frog, after the removal of two-thirds of its brain, will perform combined actions of extreme complexity, while exhibiting no powers of sensation or spontaneous movement. Nor is this condition of apparently complete insensibility accompanied by apparently intelligent actions observed only in the frog or other lower animals. Huxley quotes the case of a French sergeant whose brain was injured by a bullet-wound in such a manner that it afterwards became subject to periodical disturbances of a singular kind. During these abnormal periods he went through a routine of actions with the precision of a machine, but also, to all appearance, with no more knowledge of what he was doing than a machine possesses.[2]

For reasons which need not here be quoted, Huxley dissents from the Cartesian theory of animal insensibility. On the other hand, unlike Descartes, he extends the theory of automatism to man. That is to say, he considers that our so-called voluntary movements are not the effect of our volitions, but of certain molecular changes in the nervous system by which those volitions are accompanied. Consciousness is not an actor but merely a spectator in the drama of life. 'We are parts of the great series of causes and effects which, in unbroken continuity, composes that which is, and has been, and shall be—the sum of existence.'[3]

The theory of human automatism—that is the theory that our consciousness has no power over our actions—was not enunciated for the first time in this address. It will be found stated in Mr. Shadworth Hodgson's 'Theory of Practice,'

[1] Huxley's 'Methods and Results,' p. 221.
[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 226–34. [3] P. 244.

published four years earlier, as the prevailing physiological view; and as Huxley himself mentions, it may even be traced back to Leibniz. Tyndall, it may be observed, refused to commit himself one way or the other. He is 'unable to imagine states of consciousness interposed between the molecules of the brain, and influencing the transfer of motion among the molecules.' But he finds 'the production of consciousness by molecular motion quite as inconceivable;' and rejecting neither result, relegates the whole question to the ultimate mystery of mind.[1]

In reference to rationalism this view of consciousness is of importance primarily from its bearing on the question of determinism *versus* freewill. If we accept automatism, there is an end to the controversy, and an end to the doctrine of sin. If by me is meant my consciousness, and if this has no power to act at all, *a fortiori*, I can never initiate a train of actions, and therefore I am not a free agent in the metaphysical sense. But supposing automatism to be refuted, the old arguments against freewill will remain what they were before, and are in no way discredited by its failure.

Huxley foresaw, what indeed speedily proved true, that his theory would be vehemently opposed by the clergy, but he deprecated their wrath on the plea that such religious thinkers as Leibniz, Jonathan Edwards, and Hartley, had held substantially the same view. His opponents however, being nearly all Catholics—Roman or Anglican—might fairly have retorted that true religion was not responsible for the inconsistencies of heretics. Predestination had been thoroughly beaten out of the field; and all who held that sinners would suffer in a future life held also that their punishment would be a just retribution for sins freely committed. If there was no freedom in the transcendental sense this whole doctrine fell to pieces, and some other basis than the sense of sin must be found for Christianity.

The danger to religion did not end with the new support given by physical science to the law of universal causation. Automatism threatened not only the Catholic theory of immortality, but immortality itself. A psychic life constituted by molecular actions could not survive their cessation. I say constituted rather than caused, in order to anticipate a possible

[1] 'Fragments of Science,' Vol. II., p. 224.

evasion. Granting Huxley's contention, it may be urged that consciousness is not necessarily the product of nervous states; it may be merely their accompaniment. But this is a distinction without a difference, so far at least as the religious interest is concerned. For what we call soul or personality implies a very complex combination of mental elements; and, on the physiological theory, that combination at least is a function of the underlying material combinations, reflecting their modifications, deranged by their disorder, going to pieces when they are dissolved.

Huxley repelled the charge of fatalism on the plea that necessity has 'a logical and not a physical foundation;'[1] and that the only intelligible sense of freewill is doing what we like. But this, as we have seen, whatever other responsibilities it leaves us, destroys responsibility towards our Creator, assuming there to be one. And he repels the charge of materialism by professing himself 'utterly incapable of conceiving the existence of matter if there is no mind in which to picture that existence.'[2] But calling the body a group of symbols, or whatever other formula agnostic idealism may prefer, will not alter the dependence of our mind on the integrity of that group. And this is what automatism, no less than materialism, in its turn symbolises for religion.

In addition to the charges of fatalism and materialism, Huxley anticipates and repels the charge of atheism. On this point his language becomes rather violent, and even illogical. 'The problem of the ultimate cause of existence,' he assures us, 'seems to me hopelessly out of reach of my poor powers;'[3] adding that, 'of all the senseless babble I have ever had occasion to read, the demonstrations of these [? those] philosophers who tell us all about the nature of God would be the worst, if they were not surpassed by the still greater absurdities of the philosophers who try to prove that there is no God.'[4] There seems to be a suggestion that to deny the existence of God involves the obligation of solving the problem of existence. In reality it involves nothing of the kind. He who rejects one solution of a problem is not for that reason obliged to find another solution, and none should see this more clearly than

[1] 'Methods and Results,' p. 245.
[2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

the professed agnostic. Many worthy and modest people disbelieve in the existence of a personal devil; and if it were desirable to mark them off as a class, they might, consistently with the proprieties of language, be called adiabolists; but they are not therefore bound to explain the origin of evil. They might even go the length of trying to prove that there was no devil without incurring the charge of outrageous absurdity. It would be enough to show that the facts usually alleged on behalf of his existence admitted of some easier explanation. The only difference between their case and the case of the philosophers so contemptuously referred to by Huxley is that the word devil, as ordinarily used, admits of only one meaning, whereas the word God admits of many. Our judgment as to the good sense of those who 'undertake to prove that there is no God,' must surely depend on the particular meaning they attach to the divine name. To some of us the affirmation that there is a God, but that nothing can be known about him, may seem the most senseless babble of all.

It would be interesting to know whether Huxley extended his summary condemnation of reasoned atheism to a celebrated lecture on 'Body and Mind,' delivered before the Sunday Lecture Society on November 1, 1874, and printed as an article in the 'Fortnightly Review' for December of the same year. In that lecture the chief results of modern physiology as related to psychology are lucidly set forth. Among others the leading propositions laid down in Huxley's Address on 'Animal Automatism' are repeated and enforced. 'If anybody says'—the lecturer assures his audience—'that the will influences matter, the statement is not untrue, but it is nonsense. . . . The only thing which influences matter is the position or the motion of surrounding matter. . . . The mind is a stream of feelings which runs parallel to and simultaneous with that particular part of the action of the brain in which the cerebrum and the sensory tract are excited.'[1] Here Huxley left off, but here his successor starts a new train of thought. He asks, 'is there a possible existence of consciousness apart from a nervous system, of mind without body?'[2] Experience does not present us

[1] Clifford's 'Lectures and Essays,' Vol. II., pp. 56–7.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

with any instance of such a thing. That alone would not disprove its possibility. But the fact that mind and brain are associated in a definite way suggests that there may be a reason for the fact, in other words, that it may be explained. And if the connexion were explained, science would have given a practical proof that there is no mind without a brain.

Such an explanation is suggested in the lecture. Let us suppose that consciousness itself is the fundamental reality, that what we call matter is merely the outward aspect of the mind, that our sensations are the effects produced on us by other animated things. Then we should look on the ultimate elements of matter as representing for us the ultimate elements of feeling, while the highest forms of consciousness would be built up out of these, and would be visibly exhibited in their complexity by the complicated structure of the brain. Were this so the supposition of mind without brain would be self-contradictory, or at least a negation of the uniformity of nature.

Can we then suppose that a physical organisation of mind exists under forms inaccessible to our senses? The lecturer says, No: 'the physical world is made up of atoms and ether, there is no room in it for ghosts.'[1] Or again, is it not possible that the universe constitutes a vast brain, with a conscious mind as its underlying reality? But this question also must be met with a negative. 'For we found that the particular organisation of the brain which enables its action to run parallel with consciousness amounts to this—that disturbances run along definite channels, and that two disturbances which occur together establish links between the channels along which they run, so that they naturally occur together again. I think it will be clear to everyone that these are not characteristics of the great interplanetary spaces.' A brain so vast that the stars bore to it such a relation as the component molecules bear to our brains could neither know anything about us nor affect us by its volitions. A brain so far off as to be invisible could only affect us by its weight.

The conclusion is that in time we may expect to find as good evidence of the non-existence of God as we have now of

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

the non-existence of a planet between the earth and Venus as large as either of them.[1]

The author of this remarkable document was William Kingdon Clifford, a brilliant young Cambridge mathematician, Professor of Applied Mathematics at University College, London, since 1871. His father, an Exeter bookseller, had dealt largely in devotional literature, and was attached to High Church interests.[2] Clifford himself grew up a devout Anglican, and remained so until after taking his degree in 1867, studying Aquinas, and supporting Catholic theology by scientific arguments. At the same time he sought for the ultimate ground of religious belief in a special faculty, that is to say by the method of mysticism. What first brought him to part with his early religious beliefs was apparently the acceptance of Evolutionism as taught by Darwin and Spencer; while at the same time the study of Mazzini's writings indoctrinated him with advanced political views. More than any other English philosophic rationalist he combined the anti-clerical passion of Continental republicanism with the theoretical repudiation of all theology as simply untrue; and his experience of Southern Europe, where he travelled a good deal, especially in Spain, convinced him that the influence of the Roman Catholic priesthood made for lawless violence and dishonesty as well as for political tyranny.

It is moreover pretty evident that Clifford did not limit his animosity to the Roman Church, but extended it to the ritualist movement in England, with which, as a former Anglican, he must have been well acquainted from within. 'A revival of any form of sacerdotal Christianity' would, he holds, be an appalling calamity for the human race.[3] And therefore all attempts at reconstructing theology in any form were to be at once denounced and exposed. Such beliefs are 'the slender remnant of a system which has made its red mark on history, and still lives to threaten mankind;' 'the seed of that awful plague which has destroyed two civilisations, and but barely

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 67–8.

[2] Mallock's 'Atheism and the Value of Life,' pp. 8–9. For the other biographical statements see the Memoir prefixed to Clifford's 'Lectures and Essays.'

[3] 'Lectures and Essays,' Vol. I., p. 251.

failed to slay such promise of good as is now struggling to live among men.'[1]

A priest, properly so called, is a person who lays claim to a magical character and powers;[2] and that alone, whatever religion he professes, should stamp him as an enemy of the human race. '*Sacerdos semper ubique et omnibus inimicus.*' '*Keep your children away from the priest or he will make them the enemies of mankind.*'[3] But quite apart from his malignant influence, there are such things as mischievous religious beliefs, not to be taught at all by priest or layman. Among these Clifford mentions 'three doctrines which find very wide acceptance among our countrymen at the present day: the doctrine of original sin, of a vicarious sacrifice, and of eternal punishments.' These 'are taught broadcast and without shame in denominational schools.' Therefore 'we must tell all kinds and conditions of men that if God holds all mankind guilty of the sin of Adam, if he has visited on the innocent the punishment of the guilty, if he is to torture any single soul for ever, then it is wrong to worship him.'[4]

There seems no reason whatever for thinking that Clifford in his complete rejection of theological beliefs was influenced to any extent by his opinions about the mischievous effects due to priestly domination. His destructive inferences, whether right or wrong, seem to me much more logically worked out than the various compromises in which contemporary agnosticism was content to rest. Nor was his position a new one among the highest English intellects; the new thing was that he should have been able to give it such resonant expression. The early Benthamites were for the most part not less uncompromising in their atheism; and Grote in particular believed like him that the establishment of Christianity had been a terrible misfortune to the world. But Grote's social, political, and even literary position would have been made impossible by the publication of such views at any time under his own name. The Broad Church manifesto had to intervene before complete freedom could be realised. Nor, of course, was the Broad Church movement alone sufficient to secure it. The Vatican Decrees, the Papal machinations abroad for the destruction of national unity and freedom, the spread of Ritualism at home, and the agitation

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 253. [2] P. 228. [3] *Ibid.* [4] P. 224.

roused by the Education Act of 1870, all contributed to swell that mighty wave of opinion on whose crest Clifford rode triumphant during the last years of his brief career. Finally for him personally there was needed such an organ as the 'Fortnightly Review' had become under Mr. John Morley's editorship, and such an academic standing as he enjoyed at the Benthamite College in Gower Street, the same that twenty-five years earlier had sheltered Francis Newman's heresies, for their time even more daring than Clifford's.

Clifford himself had one of those buoyant temperaments

> 'That ever with a frolic welcome took
> The thunder and the sunshine,
> . . . . . .
> Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.'

But there were others who, though like him they accepted atheism as the inevitable outcome of modern thought, experienced no feeling of elation or relief at the prospect. In the very same year, as would seem, that saw the appearance of 'Body and Mind,' a younger contemporary of its author was wailing in private over his failure to find a God behind nature. 'Never in the history of man,' he wrote, 'has so terrible a calamity befallen the race as that which all who look may now behold advancing as a deluge, black with destruction, resistless as night, uprooting our most cherished hopes, engulfing our most precious creeds, and burying our highest life in mindless desolation. Science, whom erstwhile we thought a very Angel of God, pointing to that great barrier of Law, . . . has now herself thrown down this trusted barrier; the flood-gates of infidelity are open, and Atheism overwhelming is upon us.'[1] 'If matter and force have been eternal, so far as human mind can soar, it can discover no need of a superior mind to explain the varied phenomena of existence. . . . Indications are returned from the infinite voids of space and time by which he is surrounded that man's intelligence, with all its noble capacities for love and admiration, is yet alone—destitute of kith or kin in all this universe of being.'[2] 'Far from being able to agree

[1] 'A Candid Examination of Theism,' pp. 51–2.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

with those who affirm that the twilight doctrine of the "new faith" is a desirable substitute for the waning splendour of "the old," I am not ashamed to confess that with this virtual negation of God the universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness; . . . and when I think at times . . . of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine and the lonely mystery as now I find it, I feel the deepest pang of which my nature is susceptible.'[1]

The writer of these lugubrious confessions, John George Romanes, had, like Clifford, been brought up under highly religious influences. The son of a clerical professor from Canada, and imbued with Evangelical ideas at Cambridge, he had at first intended to take orders, and had won the Burney prize by an essay (advocating the orthodox view) on 'Christian Prayer and General Laws' in 1873. But he had already adopted the Darwinian theory; and the study of Herbert Spencer's 'First Principles' made a speedy end of his religious beliefs. Strangely enough, the question which proved so decisive with Clifford does not seem to have occurred to him. Although a professional biologist, engrossed through life with problems of nervous function and comparative intelligence, Romanes does not seem to have asked himself, how is mind possible without a nervous system? On the other hand, what he did ask himself does not seem to have troubled Clifford in the least, and that was whether the external world presents marks of having been designed by a creative intelligence. The work on theism which Romanes seems to have composed in 1874, and which he published some years later under the name of 'A Candid Examination of Theism, by Physicus,' is entirely occupied with a discussion of this question, and concludes with a slightly qualified denial. The 'Examination' covers the same ground as Mill's 'Essay on Theism,' but the essential parts were written before its publication. On reading Mill, however, Romanes added a criticism of his defence of Paley's argument; and this is one of the most interesting parts of the book.

It will be remembered that Mill staked the credibility of theism entirely on such evidence as the structure of living organisms supplied; and that while admitting the destructive effect of Darwin's hypothesis—supposing it to be verified—on

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 114.

the teleological argument, he put natural selection aside as unproved and highly improbable. Now the striking part of what Romanes says in answer to Mill is that though himself a Darwinian, he does not insist on the truth of natural selection. What he contends for is that the general fact of evolution, quite apart from its cause, has been proved; and that this fact of itself suffices to destroy the evidence of intelligent design in plants and animals.[1] For those structures to which Paley and his school would point as exhibiting the most obvious appearance of having been purposely adapted to particular ends, certainly did not leave the hands of the Creator as we now see them, but have grown by a long series of gradual modifications from other structures adapted to entirely different purposes. For instance—if I may venture to supply a couple of examples where none are given—the lungs of air-breathing animals are evolved from the swim-bladder of their aquatic ancestors; and the hand, which is an organ of prehension, has been evolved from an organ of locomotion. Accordingly they cannot reasonably be described as created for their actual functions.

In my opinion Romanes somewhat weakens the force of his argument by putting it in the form that adaptations are produced by law. We did not need the general theory of evolution to teach us that. It has long been known that the bodies supposed to exhibit such obvious marks of intelligent design have in fact been evolved by natural law from a comparatively shapeless germ. That is to say, the organic molecules build themselves up by virtue of their inherent properties into the perfect adult organism, provided with a complete machinery for self-maintenance and self-propagation. And the teleologists, so far from being disconcerted by the million-fold repetition of this process, enlarged on it as the supreme instance of creative intelligence. What, according to them, proved this was the collocation of the molecules, the mutual adjustment of their positions and properties, so combined as to converge towards a single foreseen end. Thus the theory suggested itself that, assuming evolution to be a universal law, it bore witness to design in just the same way as embryonic development. The structures of the very earliest living beings must have been so

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 39–43.

arranged that the processes of variation and heredity resulted at last in the production of ourselves and of the creatures among whom we live. The mechanical, chemical, and even vital properties of matter could not, acting alone, have brought about such a result. They were merely instruments played on by intelligent combination and guidance.

Such, I say, is the position of the evolutionary teleologist; and although, in my opinion, not an impregnable position, still it is one that Romanes has not entered into or confronted. Admitting what he calls a higher teleology, he interprets it as an argument from the mere existence of physical law and order to an intelligent First Cause; taking this line in acknowledged reference to Professor Baden Powell,[1] for whom the order of nature had been the sole proof of theism. As against eighteenth-century atheism it is, he thinks, conclusive; and personally he would have been convinced by it but for Herbert Spencer's philosophy of force. Natural law and order have now been explained as corollaries from the persistence of force, after a method set forth in 'First Principles,' and therefore it is a gratuitous assumption to explain them by the intervention of a personal God.

On this point Romanes is, in my opinion, quite at fault. First of all he adopts Spencer's strange confusion between the conservation of energy and the constancy of the natural properties of matter.[2] Then he assumes, what is not the case, that the fact of there being specific energies inherent in the ultimate particles of matter (allowing it to be a fact) can be deduced from the theory of conservation,[3] which, on the contrary, assumes those energies as given. And, finally, he confounds the idea of order with the idea of law. A law of nature is a uniformity of coexistence, succession, or resemblance. In reference to the production of phenomena, laws mean simple tendencies, realising themselves in the absence of disturbing conditions. The order of nature means the coexistence of a number of material systems, maintaining their equilibrium as against their mutual disturbances, and the recurrence of certain changes in the internal relations of each system, or in the relation of the systems to one another, at fixed intervals of time, according to a fixed principle of succession. Every order that we know of is a concrete fact,

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 47. [2] P. 52. [3] P. 54.

and has no more than the provisional stability belonging to all facts. That combinations possessing a certain stability should emerge and continue to exist for more or less protracted periods, is not strange when we consider that out of the infinite number of combinations formed by the play of natural forces, some must exhibit the conditions necessary for self-maintenance against the forces which make for their destruction. Lucretius and the eighteenth-century atheists on whom Romanes looks down so scornfully, were quite aware of this law, and used it to rebut the arguments of contemporary theologians. The discovery of the conservation of energy has given greater definiteness to our conceptions; but it has made the order of nature, as distinguished from the laws of nature, something much less abiding than before. It has assured us that human life, and indeed all life on the earth's surface, must eventually come to an end.

Because Romanes used bad arguments it does not follow that Baden Powell's case for theism was a good one. No more is proved than that there are constant resemblances and differences, coexistences and successions, in the material world. Reason consists in the recognition of that great fact. We conceive, affirm, deny, and infer, because we remember, identify, and discriminate. But to recognise is not to create; on the contrary the subjective activity seems to postulate an objective reality of older date than itself. Besides, an aboriginal intelligence cannot be conceived without states of consciousness related to one another as like and unlike. Now on Baden Powell's principle, these would have to be explained by ascending to a remoter reason, and so on *ad infinitum*.

With such emotional cravings for religious belief and such very confused ideas about scientific philosophy joined to a total ignorance of history, it is not surprising that Romanes eventually returned to his early creed. His 'Candid Examination' interests us solely as a sign of the times, as illustrating the tendency to complete atheism which Herbert Spencer's Unknowable held in unstable combination with metaphysical ideas of a more religious quality.

The very greatest contribution made to English literature in that wonderful year which has detained us so long gave the

growing tendency towards complete religious unbelief its most tragic and most virile expression. 'The City of Dreadful Night,' begun four years earlier, was completed at the beginning of 1874, and was published in the 'National Reformer' during the following spring. The author, James Thomson, was born at Port Glasgow in 1834, and brought up in an orphan asylum. For twelve years he occupied the position of an army schoolmaster, without the hope of rising any higher, and lost even this humble subsistence in consequence, it is said, of some trifling breach of discipline. After that he earned a scanty support by contributions to periodical literature, living latterly by himself in a one-roomed lodging, and indulging in habits of intemperance by which his career was first marred and finally brought to an untimely close. As a journalist he used to work for Charles Bradlaugh, whom he first met in the army, and who long continued his intimate friend. They used to argue about religion, but we are assured that Bradlaugh's influence had no share in Thomson's ultimate conversion to atheism.[1] We are told that the study of Shelley's writings probably first led him to doubt the truth of Christianity, but that independent thought and enquiry were the determining elements throughout.[2] For us the important thing to note is that his atheism, whatever may have been its origin, proved compatible with poetic vision of a high order. Religious professors, Gladstone among the number, are apt to talk as if they had no contradiction to fear except from the side of physical science; while the poets, by virtue of some peculiar insight, supernatural or otherwise, give an independent confirmation to the most essential articles of their belief. Any history of literature would suffice to show the futility of this appeal; and the experience of the seventies suggests that the advantage, if any, is for the other side. Indeed, a poet, living as he does behind the scenes, and being accurately acquainted with the machinery of illusive representation, is rather less likely than other men to be taken in by performances of which he knows the secret so well. Of course he may come to lose his hold on the distinction between appearance and reality; but the sanest poets have held fast to it; and

[1] 'Memoir of James Thomson,' by Bertram Dobell, prefixed to 'A Voice from the Nile and Other Poems,' p. xvii.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. xviii.

those who fall victims to their own visions are not, perhaps, the safest allies of traditional orthodoxy.

Apologists have also the rather dangerous habit of objecting to the arguments of certain rationalists on the curious ground that they are lacking in full experience of sin, and therefore cannot adequately appreciate the necessity of redemption. Poor James Thomson at any rate—not to mention other poets more gifted, more depraved, and as rebellious—was as well qualified as dipsomania could make him to feel the need of a redeemer, and, like Coleridge, might have felt it had the accident of birth thrown him on the flood instead of on the ebb of the religious revival.

The City of Dreadful Night is not the real world as a whole, nor is it London, although our metropolis may have furnished some hints for its description. It is rather the world as imaged in a pessimist's imagination, the ideal dwelling-place of a small minority, to whom life has brought nothing but misery, uncompensated by any hope of a brighter future for themselves or for the race, either here or beyond the grave. In that city the sun never shines; the streets are lit with lamps, burning always; but the houses are dark and still as tombs, with scarce one illuminated window. Its inhabitants are chiefly mature men, hardly one young or very old;—

'A woman rarely, now and then a child.'

None can escape but by death, which is looked for as a blessed relief; and nothing in ordinary human nature is so unintelligible to the inhabitants of that city as that men should complain of time's swift flight, when to them it seems so intolerably slow.

In the City of Dreadful Night there is a great cathedral where a congregation assembles—not numerous, but seeming so in comparison with the few passers-by in the deserted streets. No chanting is heard, nor music, nor prayer, only a sermon delivered by a preacher with

'Two steadfast and intolerable eyes,'

and a voice to match. He has spent long sunless years in search of some consolation for his audience in their woe. And this is what he has found:—

> ' authentic word I bring,
> Witnessed by every dead and living thing;
> Good tidings of great joy for you, for all:
> There is no God; no Fiend with names divine
> Made us and tortures us; if we must pine,
> It is to satiate no Being's gall.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> ' This little life is all we must endure,
> The grave's most holy peace is ever sure,
> We fall asleep and never wake again.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> ' I find no hint throughout the Universe
> Of good or ill, of blessings or of curse;
> I find alone Necessity supreme;'—

And those who do not like their position in it may end it when they will. One of the congregation exclaims that the preacher speaks truth:

> ' We have no personal life beyond the grave;
> There is no God; Fate knows nor wrath nor ruth:
> Can I find here the comfort which I crave?'

Then follows an enumeration of all the blessings life might have given him, but has not given. His one chance of happiness through all eternity is lost. Why waste words which are a mockery of consolation, when consolation is impossible? To which the preacher answers that it is even so, but that he draws comfort from the certainty and nearness of death, which means annihilation.[1]

James Thomson was not a pessimist in the true sense. He did not regard human life as universally, inherently, necessarily evil. Misery, as the reply to the preacher shows, is just personal ill-luck; and the despairing denizens of the gloom-wrapt city are confessedly an infinitesimal minority of the human race. Indeed some of Thomson's other pieces bring out with quite exhilarating vividness the enjoyments still possible for hard-worked men and women amid the squalid surroundings of London. By temperament and private circumstances, however, he was unhappy and hopeless; nor does his presentation of necessarian atheism look particularly inviting. Some might be attracted by the high courage and transparent sincerity of such preaching; but more, perhaps, would be alienated—as indeed we hear that Bradlaugh received three or four letters

[1] 'The City of Dreadful Night and Other Poems,' pp. 35–42.

energetically protesting against the publication of the 'City of Dreadful Night' in the 'National Reformer.'[1] Perhaps his subscribers fancied that it might be interpreted to the disadvantage of their own negative creed. But Thomson had neither been made a pessimist by his atheism nor an atheist by his pessimism. He had rejected religion on grounds of pure reason, from its inconsistency with what we know of nature and history, and in spite of the appalling blank which the extinction of its promises must have involved for one whose life's love had been snatched from him by an early death. And his rejection of it may fairly be taken as symptomatic of the extent to which rationalism had spread among the most powerful English minds at this period.

Even more significant is the immediate and widespread recognition obtained by his poem in the highest circles of English culture. Apart from expressions of admiration given in private by George Eliot,[2] Mr. George Meredith,[3] Mr. Bertram Dobell, P. B. Marston,[3] and others, the 'City of Dreadful Night' was favourably noticed on its first appearance by critics in the 'Academy,' and, what is more remarkable, in the 'Spectator.' Six years later a firm was found bold enough to republish it with some other pieces in book-form; and since then complaints have been made that the name of James Thomson is associated in the minds of young people with its ill-fated author rather than with the poet of the 'Seasons' and the 'Castle of Indolence.'

In his last years Thomson might be more accurately described as an agnostic than as an atheist;[5] and agnosticism was in fact the point of equilibrium round which the oscillations of contemporary thought were moving. It constituted, as we have seen, the dominant note in Spencer's philosophy, although always with a tendency to pass into theism, pantheism, or atheism, according to the speculative interest that came uppermost in his thoughts at the moment. Still the great success of the name as a party badge was due neither to Spencer, who did not adopt it till a later period, nor to Huxley, who did his best

[1] 'Life of James Thomson,' by H. S. Salt, p. 116.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 111. [3] P. 137. [4] P. 110.
[5] 'Life,' p. 298, where a poem on the subject is quoted.

to make it unmeaning, but to Leslie Stephen. This erudite and humorous essayist had been known for some years before making his decisive stroke as a rather desultory assailant of the popular theology in all its forms, the Broad Church compromise being singled out for particular derision. Brought up from his earliest years not merely to believe in religion, but to believe in it as true with the truth of authentic history and demonstrated science, he had been accustomed to think of it as something that if it were not true in that sense was nothing. At King's College, London, he presumably came under Maurice's influence, as his brother Fitzjames certainly did, and very likely he received the same ultimate impression that to hear the great reconciler's sermons was 'like watching the struggles of a drowning creed.'[1] Leslie Stephen's creed, whatever shape it assumed at the University, proved buoyant enough to float him into holy orders, though not, I have been told, without some pressure from his father, the Evangelical Sir James Stephen. After spending some years as a college tutor at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, he abandoned the clerical profession, went into literature, and became editor of the 'Cornhill Magazine.' He allowed Matthew Arnold's 'Literature and Dogma' to appear in its pages, but his own contributions to rationalism were published elsewhere, chiefly in 'Fraser's Magazine' and the 'Fortnightly Review.' Among these was an Essay entitled 'An Agnostic's Apology,' which appeared in the 'Fortnightly' for June, 1876. From its publication dates the world-wide celebrity of the name agnostic.

Sir Leslie Stephen never troubled himself to argue against religious beliefs. Like Auguste Comte, he constantly assumes that the work has been done in a direct controversial way by the rationalists of the eighteenth century, and indirectly but more effectively by the scientific discoveries and the historical criticism of the nineteenth century. The Darwinian theory seems to have impressed him more particularly as a deadly blow to the whole system of Catholic theology, and any attempt to reconcile the two struck him as ridiculous if not as insincere. On the other hand, he does not seem to have felt that violent animosity against the clergy which we have seen to be so common among the English freethinkers of the period. His

[1] 'Life of Sir J. F. Stephen,' p. 125.

writings must have powerfully aided the anti-clerical movement, but with that movement he never shows any sympathy whatever. It would be very natural to account for this attitude of aloofness by supposing that Stephen had no great faith in movements of any kind, nor any wish to identify himself with a party; and certainly his writings give one the impression—I will not say of flippancy—but at any rate of one who habitually looks for the humorous side of things, who is above all on his guard against taking anything too seriously. Yet with all his apparent irony and sceptical disillusionment, this master of playful banter consented to be President of the Ethical Society and also of the Rationalist Press Association—positions which must have brought him into contact with various persons to whom he would seem no less deficient in seriousness than they would seem to him deficient in sense of humour.

In fact the author of 'An Agnostic's Apology' had abundant seriousness as often as the occasion required it, which was as often as realities required to be disentangled from illusions; and his humour was perhaps not unconnected with a clear and keen sense of their distinction. All great humorists have been remarkable for their hostility to shams, using their caustic ridicule as a powerful reagent for the exposure and destruction of the spurious or debased currencies which are ever tending to drive precious metal out of use. And Leslie Stephen's implacable hostility to the popular religion in all its forms seems to have arisen less from its untruth, which was the all-important motive with George Eliot and Clifford, than from its unreality. What provoked him was not that religion gave an answer to the problem of existence which experience showed to be illusory, but that the answer left every difficulty unsolved, and was felt to be illusory by the believers themselves. When agnostics are twitted with their confession of utter ignorance about what lies beyond experience, their best apology is that Christians, when pressed by philosophical enquiries, have to confess an equal ignorance, to fall back on an ultimate acknowledgment of the same impenetrable mystery, with the addition of encumbrances from which genuine agnosticism is free. The doctrine of hell is a notorious example of the new difficulties which an alleged revelation has created for our bewilderment; and Newman can only defend this particular puzzle by covering

it over with a still deeper veil of gloom. 'The great mystery is, not that evil has no end, but that it had a beginning.'[1] But the agnostic shows that the very illusoriness of hell is responsible for its worst horrors. 'You would frighten men into virtue by bugbears. To make your threats effective at all, you must exaggerate the dream indefinitely to compensate for its unreality.'[2]

As a restraint on vice the doctrine of a future life is either a revolting horror or an ineffective scarecrow. As a consolation offered in the hour of bereavement it is an exasperating mockery. Leslie Stephen had evidently felt it as such after the death of his first wife, Thackeray's younger daughter, in 1875; and his 'Agnostic's Apology' seems to have been written under the immediate impulse of his experiences on that occasion. It vibrates all through with a passionate personal note; and that is what explains its immediate success in securing acceptance for the party-name. The author's masterly handling of the dialectical weapons told for much; literary skill and charm told for more; but character and sincerity told for most. Here was evidently one to whom at a supreme crisis the consolations of religion had once more been offered, and who had angrily flung them aside as not merely illusory, but as adding a new sting to the anguish of bereaved affection.

It is one thing to popularise a word and quite another thing to ensure that it shall be correctly used. Indeed, the more popular it becomes the more certain it is to be misapplied. Our apologist quite correctly summed up agnosticism in the two propositions that there are limits to the human intelligence and that theology lies outside those limits. Since then it has been made convertible with a general profession of scepticism, with the mere denial of revelation, and, even by atheists themselves, with the complete negation of God and immortality. Historically our interest is to show how, as professed by more careful thinkers than Spencer and Huxley, agnosticism became dissociated from the disturbing metaphysical elements with which it had at first been adulterated. There is no trace of an Unknowable, with or without a capital letter, in this or any other of Stephen's writings; nor apparently did the pretended necessity for reconciling religion with science appeal to him under any other form.

[1] 'Grammar of Assent,' p. 422. [2] 'An Agnostic's Apology,' p. 119.

In this he was a more advanced rationalist than Mr. Morley, who postulated a religion of some unspecified kind as a necessary condition of human happiness, or Clifford, who had recourse to something that he called 'cosmic emotion.'

In Sir Leslie Stephen's works the history of rationalism occupies a greater space than his own direct contributions to the destruction of religious belief. His 'History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century' gives an elaborate account of the English Deists, as also of Hume's sceptical writings; while his 'English Utilitarians' touches, although much more slightly, on what Bentham and his followers did in the same direction. In my opinion he greatly under-estimates the value of the deistic school;[1] but as compared with the way in which they were habitually treated by orthodox critics his account amounts to a partial vindication of their services. Hume is more satisfactorily dealt with; but to those who are making their first acquaintance with that greatest of all rationalistic critics, Huxley's little volume[2] must still be recommended as the most luminous introduction to the study of his philosophical treatises.

If any one year can be specified as that in which English rationalism reached its most intense expression, 1877 must be named as the date. Nearly every number of the 'Fortnightly Review' during the second half of that year contained an attack by some powerful writer either on theology as a whole or on some generally accepted article of theological belief.[3] And that year also saw the foundation of the 'Nineteenth Century,' a review avowedly established under the direction of Mr. James Knowles, among other purposes, for the fullest and freest discussion of religious and philosophical questions, since the 'Contemporary Review,' which he previously edited, had been temporarily closed to freethought. But notwithstanding

[1] It has since been vindicated by Mr. J. M. Robertson in his 'History of Freethought.'

[2] 'Hume,' in the 'English Men of Letters' Series.

[3] Clifford's 'Ethics of Religion' appeared in July, Mr. Morley's article on the 'Système de la Nature' in August, Leslie Stephen's 'Scepticism of Believers' in September, his two articles on the 'Grammar of Assent' in November and December, and Mr. Lionel Tollemache's 'Hell and the Divine Veracity' in December, 1877.

the accession of this new organ, the rationalistic movement showed signs of slackening through the last years of the decade, and in the early eighties seemed approaching its extinction.[1] In the light of subsequent experience we know that this decline was only apparent, and that ideas adverse to the old beliefs were becoming all the time more widely diffused through every stratum of English society. Still it remains true that the advanced intellectual attack was suddenly arrested as by an invisible arm; and this fact requires to be explained.

Putting aside the well-worn theory of reaction, about which enough has been said on former occasions, and which in this instance the later advances of rationalism would show to be particularly infelicitous, the first and most obvious explanation is to be found in the premature loss of him who was the life and soul of the whole movement. Clifford died on March 3, 1879; and we are told that death was felt at once as a 'mortal stroke' to the 'Association of Liberal Thinkers,' formed less than a year before at the suggestion of himself and Mr. Moncure Conway, with Huxley for its president.[2] But just as in the case of Newman's secession a generation before, and of the calamities which overtook certain leading Broad Churchmen in the early sixties, the importance of the personal factor must not be exaggerated. Clifford, had he been spared, would no doubt have done much for science, for its destructive application to theology he could have done little more. The causes acting in arrest of negation would have been too strong even for him. We have to seek for them deeper down, and before all in the changed aspect of the political world.

Among a considerable number of educated people Clifford's advocacy did rationalism no good. Agnostics were frightened by his pronounced atheism. Positivists were annoyed by his contemptuous disregard for the restrictions imposed by their master not only on metaphysical but also on physical speculation. He would have nothing to do with the Unknowable.

[1] W. R. Greg's 'Creed of Christendom,' published in 1851, did not reach its third edition until 1873. After that the sale rose rapidly, and an eighth edition was called for in 1883, when its popularity suddenly came to an end, that is to say a chill which began to be felt on the sensitive surface of English opinion four or five years earlier took that time to reach the lower strata of readers.

[2] 'Autobiography of Moncure D. Conway,' Vol. II., p. 354.

With the keenest interest in human welfare, he persisted as a mathematician in studying problems, such as that of a possible limit to space, which had no assignable connexion with our happiness. And for many to whom the deep things of philosophical method remained unintelligible, the mere fact of his being a man of science, the fact of his attacking religion from the scientific side, was enough to create an adverse prejudice. This prejudice had been growing all through the decade; by 1878 it had become so conspicuous as to draw forth a remonstrance from G. H. Lewes in the shape of an article—the last, I believe, that he ever wrote—on 'The Dread and Dislike of Science.' Of course theological animosity counts for a good deal among the explanations offered; but another motive is assigned whose influence spread far beyond clerical circles, and which was responsible for a great volume of hostile feeling towards science among men and women who had openly renounced Christianity. This was the horror excited by vivisection. It began with certain disclosures made in the 'Times' about experiments on dogs in Professor Schiff's physiological laboratory at Florence; and although Schiff's methods were proved to be comparatively humane, the outcry led to revelations of what the public, with or without warrant, considered unspeakable atrocities, practised particularly on domestic pets, by scientific experimentalists all over the civilised world. I need not go into the merits of a controversy with which we are all painfully familiar, and which interests us here only in so far as it helps to account for the anti-scientific feeling of the late seventies. And it accounts for so much that to seek for other causes seems needless labour.

That the feeling itself existed and acted injuriously on the cause of rationalism may be shown by two other important pieces of evidence, both coming from liberal sources. Miss F. P. Cobbe observed that, 'as Dean Stanley seems to have felt, there was somewhere between the years 1874 and 1878 a turn of the tide of men's thoughts (due, I think, to the paramount influence and insolence which physical science then assumed), which has postponed any decisive "Broad" movement, for years beyond my possible span of life.'[1] Miss Cobbe was a strong anti-vivisectionist, and naturally did not love physical science. But

[1] 'Life of F. P. Cobbe,' Vol. I., p. 106.

her dread and dislike of it could not have surpassed the animosity against it, or at least against its representatives, felt by Samuel Butler, the author of 'Erewhon' and 'Erewhon Revisited.' Those novels are two of the bitterest satires ever written on Christianity, and they are written particularly from the anti-clerical point of view. Yet Butler preferred leaving the clergy where they were to seeing their place taken by 'those wolves in sheep's clothing who are thirsting for the blood of their victim.' According to him, 'the spirit behind the Church is true, though her letter—true once—is now true no longer. The spirit behind the High Priests of Science is as lying as its letter.'[1] These words seem to have been written somewhere about 1884, but they probably represent convictions formed at a somewhat earlier period.

Men of science bore the attacks made on them with patience and dignity; and at the present day it would be almost an impertinence to say a word in their defence. But it may be not amiss to point out once more the absurdity of making them responsible for the spread of rationalism. At no time have they been so actively concerned on its behalf as during the seventies, and even then science only contributed three great names to the anti-clerical movement, Tyndall, Huxley, and Clifford. It must be remembered also under what severe provocation they struck back at theology, how the progress of geology had been hampered by the upholders of Biblical infallibility, how scientific teaching had been kept out of Oxford by the Tractarians, how the theory of evolution had been denounced and ridiculed by religionists, how Bishop Wilberforce forgot the manners of a gentleman in addressing its champion, Huxley. On the other hand, Lyell and Darwin remained silent; Owen, Carpenter, Balfour Stewart, Tait, and Sir William Thomson (now Lord Kelvin) were among the watch-dogs of the fold rather than among its lupine enemies, whether in sheep's clothing or not.

The truth is that even in the seventies—and much more at other times—dogma has been threatened by literature rather than by science. Samuel Butler himself was among the most formidable of its assailants on the satirical side; while as serious critics we need only recall the names of Matthew

[1] 'The Way of All Flesh,' p. 397.

Arnold, Leslie Stephen, J. S. Mill, Mr. Morley, Mr. Cassels, and Mr. Tollemache. It may even be contended that the scientific men who joined in the fray fought rather as littérateurs than as savans, and did more execution by the keenness and accurate aim of their style than by the weight of their knowledge. Granting that their scientific reputation first won them a favourable hearing—although in Clifford's case this is more than we are entitled to assume—still their continued influence must have been due to advantages of quite another kind, to gifts no more connected with mathematical reasoning or experimental physics than Matthew Arnold's command of prose depended on his poetic power, or Mr. Morley's familiarity with French thought on his ability as a political orator.

The unpopularity of science, whatever it may have been worth, really counted for much less in the temporary eclipse of rationalism than the diminishing importance of the danger against which rationalists fought. In the last chapter I drew attention to the fearful calamities with which the Papal claims were threatening civilisation from the meeting of the Vatican Council on, and how that awful background of storm-cloud threw into lurid relief the ritualistic movement, and the endowment from public funds of clerical education in England. Now this danger was to a great extent dissipated by the successive victories of the Republican party in France, terminating with the resignation of Marshal Macmahon, the agent of the legitimist and clerical faction, and the election of Jules Grévy to the Presidency of the Republic at the beginning of 1879. Thus the prospect of another French expedition for the restoration of the Temporal Power was indefinitely postponed. At the same time the consolidation of the new German Empire had become so complete that the Papal intrigues for its disruption, if there ever had been any, ceased to occupy men's thoughts. The death of Pius IX., and the election of a new Pope who was believed to entertain more moderate opinions than his predecessor, also helped to relieve the extreme tension of the relations between the Church and the new régime. Finally the death of the Prince Imperial in South Africa deprived Catholicism of an expected champion of its cause.

Simultaneously with these important modifications in the political prospects of Western Europe, a new interest was springing up in Eastern Europe which for a time put the anti-clerical movement out of sight. A sudden and virulent outbreak of Turkish fanaticism in the Balkan peninsula united the vast majority of English liberals in a common desire to free the Greek Christians from their Mohammedan oppressors; while at the same time, by a very curious distribution of sympathies, it set the freethinkers and the clericalists respectively at variance among themselves. Those who sided with the outraged Slavs and with their Russian champion were satirically described at the time as a coalition of High Churchmen, Quakers, and Atheists, while they in their turn called the pro-Turkish party a coalition of Evangelicals, Roman Catholics, and Positivists. And after making every allowance for epigrammatic exaggeration, we may safely affirm that the lines of political and religious cleavage which before had nearly coincided, now ran nearly at right angles to one another.

Had the general election been held a few years earlier, it seemed quite possible that the Liberal leader might have been carried back to power on a wave of anti-papal feeling. As is well known, such a feeling had nothing to do with the victory of 1880, which was mainly due to sympathy with the Eastern Christians and with the Irish Catholics. But judging by experience, even a victory won on anti-Catholic or anti-clerical lines would have been unfavourable to the rationalistic movement in speculation, simply because it would have drawn off so much energy from the development of principles to the development of practice. The diversion of course operated still more powerfully after an electoral victory won partly on lines of religious enthusiasm. And when we consider that the tide had already begun to turn two years before the dissolution of Parliament, the rapid literary decline of rationalism will become quite intelligible, even apart from those wider causes which did not come into full operation until a somewhat later period. But it is important to observe that through all the temporary eddies of sentiment, determined by historical circumstances of a relatively accidental character, the main current of opinion continued quietly moving in one direction, marking a steady encroachment of reason on religious belief. Evidence

of such a drift, not then accessible, has since been abundantly supplied, and not many would now be prepared to deny it. I mention this as a caution against the hasty and superficial observations which sometimes lead both religious believers and rationalists into supposing that faith is on the increase because those who discard it are so absorbed in adding to positive knowledge that they have neither time nor inclination for the removal of errors which have apparently ceased to obstruct their advance.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RETREAT OF THEOLOGY

THE history of English rationalism during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century offers little of the interest which so frequently characterised its earlier phases. Rationalism is still represented by men of powerful intellect; but their operations resemble the slow sap and mine of a siege rather than the brilliant evolutions of an army in the open field. Through all that period no discoveries in science were made of a kind to affect the issue between reason and religion. With a few exceptions, taking rank rather as survivals of the preceding age than as illustrations of new thought, neither in prose nor poetry did literature give expression to the mood of revolt against superstition. Legislation records only one more victory for religious freedom—the permission given to members of Parliament to substitute an affirmation for an oath. And along with this declining interest in the drama of thought there goes a still more marked decline in the interestingness of the characters engaged. Those gifted and romantic young enthusiasts, from Coleridge to Clifford, who did so much to brighten and relieve our journey up till now, must not be looked for any more. It is not that they have crossed over to the other side. Faith has no longer her Arthur Hallams, Kebles, Newmans, Hurrell Froudes, Gladstones, or Ashleys to boast of. Genius of a fascinating personal kind seems to have abandoned these conflicts altogether. When another generation has passed away and the inner life of those twenty years comes to be better known, some unsuspected elements of individuality may be forthcoming; but they are not available for the present book.

Physical science was much studied, and talked about still more, during those last two decades of the century. But its

work, whatever that amounted to, had been done. Some old battles were fought over again, to the signal discomfiture of the reactionaries. But no real addition, as I have said, was made to our knowledge of natural causation as a substitute for the appeal to supernatural intervention. What we shall have to deal with henceforth in this connexion will be the retreat of theology from the positions so confidently maintained in the forties and fifties, combined with attempts to show that the acceptance of evolution leaves religious belief entirely unaffected. This was precisely what the men of science used to maintain when it was their interest to conciliate a public deeply imbued with religious prejudices; now, on the contrary, they adopt the tactics of their former antagonists, and represent evolution as irreconcilable with the Catholic conception of man's origin, history, and destiny. The destructive action of reason is not shown as before, by setting up new principles, but by pointing out the incompatibility of established principles with the old beliefs.

Whatever considerations drawn from evolution might be worth one way or the other, the fundamental issues had to be fought out on wider and deeper grounds. And perhaps the chief importance of Darwinism lay, after all, in the fresh interest it gave to the psychology and ethics of the experimental school, so powerfully represented, before the 'Origin of Species' appeared, by Mill, Spencer, and Bain. It was understood that their principles were essentially identical with Hume's; and Hume accordingly became as much a mark for admiration or attack in the seventies, if not even earlier, as he had been a century before. But he was no longer met by Reid's common-sense philosophy. The sedulous study of German philosophy had familiarised men with the fact that Kant's whole criticism owed its origin to doubts awakened by Hume's analysis of causation; while Hegel again had constructed his system on developed Kantian lines, with a view to eliminating that residual agnosticism which Kant's supposed refutation of Hume had still left as a burden on thought. Accordingly since agnosticism had come to be regarded as Christianity's most dangerous enemy, those who wished to combine reason with faith turned in their distress to *its* enemy, forgetful or regardless of Strauss and Feuerbach, forgetful also that a philosophy

must be valueless unless it can give clear unequivocal answers to questions about the personality of God, the freedom of man, and the immortality of the soul. In my opinion, Hegel made his meaning quite clear on all three points, and was quite accurately interpreted in their own sense by the left wing of his school; what I wish to point out is the singular misconception of those neo-Hegelians, whether at Oxford or elsewhere, who fancied that a philosophy which had proved so destructive to religious belief in Germany could be of any real service to religion in England against the much more advanced criticism exercised on it half a century later. It will be our business to follow out the rather summary process by which these attempted apologetics were brushed aside, and Hegel's dialectic once more made available for its primary purpose, the dissipation of romanticist illusions.

Advanced Biblical criticism in Germany had for a time been associated with the left wing of Hegel's school; and Mansel had tried to discredit both by emphasising their mutual connexion. In reality the connexion was little more than accidental, the two studies having no more in common than the historical method shared by them with every other department of enquiry; and so far as English scholarship goes, the connexion has long ceased to exist. But in criticism as in philosophy the dependence of England on Germany continues marked, the efforts of her scholars being chiefly directed towards the popularisation of results obtained by the more unfettered labours of the Teutonic masters. As rationalism, however, the results themselves are less important than the position of those by whom they are adopted and made known. After a long period of suspense, the clergy take full advantage of the liberty bestowed on them by lay tribunals in defiance of the Episcopate and of Convocation, disintegrating the Scriptural Canon to such an extent that the recognition of its authority becomes a mere formality, and reinterpreting dogmatic theology in such a way as would have more than satisfied the claims of Coleridge and his Broad Church successors. Of course not every theologian who accepts these positions would call himself, or be called by others a rationalist; nevertheless it remains true that what was once a religious belief has been in their case destroyed, and destroyed by the action of reason.

If England has renounced her initiative in philosophy and Biblical criticism, there is at least one other department of enquiry where she has victoriously asserted it. This is what we call anthropology—the early history of beliefs and institutions. Here for a generation past our countrymen have taken the lead by a long way; and as their investigations have been largely concerned with religious origins, the results have an interest for our subject. Perhaps in no single instance have undisputed conclusions been reached; nor, if they had been reached, would their relevance to our present religious controversies be universally admitted. At the very beginning of this work I took occasion to remark that the importance of the historical method as a rationalistic weapon has, in my opinion, been exaggerated. Still, as was then pointed out, to show how a surviving religious belief originated in a conception of nature now abandoned as illusory goes a long way towards destroying its authority; and authority, as we know, is the primary method of faith. The claims of the dogma in question are then thrown back for their support on the remaining methods of faith, or on pure reason; and if, as some rationalists contend, these other arguments owe what convincingness they possess either to the hidden presence of authority, or to mental habits of a misleading sort inherited from the civilisation in which the dogma first gained credence,—then they are more likely to collapse when the hollowness of their support has been exposed. At any rate it is certain that some of our anthropologists have either abandoned various religious beliefs under the influence of the historical method, or have considered it as fatal to their continued existence. To omit it, therefore, would be to leave our survey of the causes making for English rationalism incomplete.

The scope of the present chapter is indicated by its title. It will be chiefly occupied with an account of the various concessions to rationalism made by writers whose attitude in the first instance would seem to mark them out as defenders rather than as assailants of the faith, or at least as hostile critics of the philosophy set up in opposition to faith. Under this head we shall have to trace the relations of neo-Hegelianism to Christian theism down to the end of the century and a little beyond; while occasional works of a less systematic character will serve to indicate the position taken up by men and women of

intellectual distinction to the same ultimate problems, with such help as may be obtained from recently published biographies in illustration of the general trend of opinion. Finally, the contributions of anthropology to rationalism must be reserved for another and concluding chapter, where some references to Continental opinion as represented by the most widely read foreign men of letters, will also find a place.

Writing to a friend in 1875, Jowett describes Herbert Spencer as 'rather swaggering and triumphant at Oxford,'[1]—particularly among scientific men, who found their own ideas given back to them by the philosopher of evolution in a slightly generalised form. Physicists would naturally prefer a thinker who entered into their pursuits to one who was ignorant of or who ignored them. But Spencer's philosophy, as we know, was really founded on ethics, its adherents were chiefly persons of general culture, and his intellectual relations with mere scientific experts seem to have been rather strained. However this may be, we need not doubt the Master's admission, confirmed as it is from other sources, that Spencer did for a time enjoy the supremacy at Oxford. With what qualification, if any, 'supremacy' must be understood we need not here enquire, for at any rate it was of short duration. Spencer merely served as a connecting link between Mill and Hegel. While disclaiming all knowledge of things in themselves, 'First Principles' gave the student an objective philosophy, and although professedly agnostic, it contained, as I have shown, a large element of pantheism. Thus an easy transition was furnished to a philosophy which professed to make the knowledge of reality complete.

Hegel's philosophy had long been familiar, at least by name, to Oxford; Jowett had read and talked about it; Mansel looked forward to its wider diffusion as the worst result of University reform; an English translation of the 'Philosophy of History,' published by Bohn in 1857, had become very popular among the younger men before 1870. In the era of compromise and conciliation it became an object with believers —or rather with those who believed in believing—to capture this formidable force for the conservative interest. This

[1] 'Jowett's Letters,' p. 195.

Herculean labour was attempted by a Scottish metaphysician, Dr. Hutchison Stirling, in a celebrated work called 'The Secret of Hegel,' published in 1865.

Dr. Stirling is a writer of great imaginative genius, and a thinker of high intellectual power, but, in my opinion, without judgment, without a right perception of things as they are. To him the romanticist and reactionist illusions of the early nineteenth century represent a real and permanent progress on the Enlightenment, on the rationalism of the eighteenth century, a reconciliation of the Age of Reason with the Ages of Faith, the consummation of that unifying process being due to Hegel. He sees with perfect clearness that the whole contemporary movement of English thought has been directed towards the undoing of this work, that it marks a return to the rationalistic eighteenth-century tradition, a resumption of the destructive criticism so long interrupted and maligned. What he has failed to see is that Buckle and the Essayists had the flowing tide with them, that their fault was not to commit themselves more boldly to its current. And his conception of Hegel's position falls equally wide of the mark. 'The Secret of Hegel' is, according to him, the rehabilitation of orthodoxy. 'Kant and Hegel have no object but to restore Faith—Faith in God—Faith in the immortality of the Soul and the Freedom of the Will—nay, Faith in Christianity as the Revealed Religion—and that, too, in perfect harmony with the Right of Private Judgment.'[1] That Kant and Hegel, to begin with, had hopelessly failed to convince their own countrymen of those dogmas does not seem to have at all shaken their Scottish interpreter's confidence in their ability to convince the unbelieving portion of the British public. Nor again does the thought seem to have disturbed him that in Germany itself Hegel passed for having utterly ruined precisely those three articles of faith which Kant undertook to restore, or that the master's own calculated ambiguities of expression in this respect had been effectually cleared up by his disciples of the left wing. Hegel seemed more like a beacon with a revolving light set up to warn ships off the rocks than a pillar of fire to guide men through the desert into the promised land.

An obvious if not easy course was to show that Strauss and

[1] 'The Secret of Hegel,' p. xxii.

the others had misunderstood or misinterpreted Hegel, and that the dialectic method, rightly manipulated, would logically lead to conclusions the reverse of theirs. But this is just what Dr. Stirling has not attempted to do. His work deals only with the Logic, and only with a relatively small portion of that. The Phenomenology, the Philosophies of Religion, of Art, of History, of everything whence Hegel's views about theology may be gathered, remain practically untouched. Hence arises a not unreasonable suspicion that the commentator knows his author's real secret quite well, and knows also that it is known to the initiated, but will not follow Strauss in revealing such mysteries to a profane public. He may be using these august words, God, Freedom, and Immortality in an esoteric sense for himself, in an exoteric sense for the vulgar. Then ideal truth would bear much the same relation to the articles of dogmatic theology that those articles themselves bear to the symbolic representations of sacred art. I do not say that Dr. Stirling means this; I only say that such an explanation is vividly suggested by his way of dealing with the subject. And the disclosures of younger Scottish Hegelians give it a certain probability.

Of these the one who comes next in chronological order to Dr. Stirling, so far as philosophical authorship goes, is the late Professor William Wallace, whose translation of Hegel's shorter Logic appeared in 1873, accompanied by 'Prolegomena,' giving a general view, more luminous than distinct or satisfactory, of Hegel's entire system. And perhaps the least distinct or satisfactory chapter is that which deals with the philosophy of religion. So gingerly indeed is the handling as to give the impression that Wallace purposely shirked an explanation of what Hegel really thought about dogmatic theology in order to avoid giving offence. His own position, so far as it can be gathered from his Gifford Lectures on Natural Theology delivered several years later, presents the same elusive appearance. In fact it has no more religious value than the so-called agnosticism of Herbert Spencer, and like that includes the impracticable suggestion of something higher than personality as an attribute of the Absolute Being. Wallace was a pupil of Jowett's, and he followed Jowett's example in making Hegelianism a universal solvent that no vessel can contain.

Wallace's predecessor in the chair of Moral Philosophy at Oxford, Professor T. H. Green, is sometimes spoken of as a Hegelian. Both as regards the general method of philosophy and its particular application, this is a complete misconception, as various sayings of Green's sufficiently prove. 'I read Hegel's Logic ten years ago and could make nothing of it.' 'It (the Logic) will all have to be done over again.' 'I looked into Hegel the other day and found it a strange *Wirrwarr*.'[1] Green's philosophical works also convey the impression of being constructed on other than Hegelian lines. But they also convey the impression of a mind that owes much to a close study of the German masters, and not least among these, of Hegel. And what is most important from our point of view, there is the same fundamental ambiguity in dealing with religious questions that characterises the Scottish interpreters of Hegel. To explain in what it consists, some account of Green's metaphysical system must be given.

When Green first began to teach (1866) Mill held the field at Oxford, that is to say the associationist theory prevailed in psychology and the utilitarian theory in ethics. Green dissented from both, but more particularly, as would seem, from the view which regards the greatest happiness as the end of action, happiness being defined as pleasure unmixed with pain. He considered that no addition of pleasurable feelings to one another could constitute a true end. This for a reasonable being must be something ideal, something constituted by a single unifying principle. But in order to gain admittance for this idealising method in ethics, it was necessary to find a basis for it in the very structure of the human mind, to reform psychology and metaphysics. Just as Mill and his whole school had falsified the idea of an end by resolving it into an incoherent aggregate of pleasurable feelings, so also they had falsified the idea of knowledge by their theory of association, by imagining that sensations, whether original or remembered, can group themselves into thoughts by any affinity

[1] The last phrase is quoted by Henry Sidgwick from his last philosophical talk with Green ('Mind,' N.S. Vol. X., p. 19). The other two I give from memory, and can furnish no references, but am confident that I have seen them in print.

resulting from continuity or resemblance. A series of impressions received by the mind in succession, each passing away the moment after it has been experienced, could not possibly unite together so as to form a knowledge of objects and events. The conceiving mind which unifies them into a body of experience must itself be above time, not only to construct each individual experience as an object of thought distinct from itself, but also in order to the possibility of the very consciousness of time. A succession of ideas is not an idea of succession.

Mill was no stranger to this line of reasoning, and had even accepted it in his 'Examination of Hamilton' to the extent of admitting the consciousness of time as something that conditions the acquisition of knowledge by association, but that association cannot explain, an ultimate inconceivability making everything else conceivable.[1] And Kant had also taken the distinction between the matter and the form of knowledge as the starting-point of his whole system, crediting the mind with a regular outfit of intuitions and categories, by whose agency it reduces the rolling miscellany of sensations into a coherent framework of organised knowledge. But he accepted the mental mechanism without demur or curiosity, not indeed, like Mill, as an ultimate inconceivability, but as an ultimate fact. To any one asking for an explanation of its existence he would probably have replied that the very idea of an explanation implied the existence of the mechanism, and therefore became unmeaning on the hypothesis of its not existing.

I have related elsewhere how Kant supplemented his theoretical agnosticism by a curious system of practical postulates whose real meaning is that as God, freewill, and immortality cannot be disproved, and as it seems highly convenient for us to believe in them, their reality may with advantage be assumed. His German successors forsook this line of argument, and reclaimed the whole of existence for the domain of reasoned truth. But the result was that they returned under various disguises to the necessarian pantheism of Spinoza, thus confirming to all intents and purposes the extreme negations of the Enlightenment. In this respect what chiefly distinguishes Hegel from his compeers is the sufficiently transparent arrangement

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 242.

by which he suffers the popular mythology to exist side by side with his own philosophy as a symbolical representation of its meaning for the use of the commencing student. It was on the strength of the exoteric position thus assigned to Christianity that Dr. Stirling—whether accepting it or not as his true inwardness—recommended Hegel to the favour of the British public.

Green also attempts to transcend the limitations imposed on human faculty by Kant; but he has a method of his own for transcending them, which is neither the ophelism of Kant nor the dialectic of Hegel. Although a severe critic of Berkeley's idealism, he seems to have found in it the leading suggestion for his own metaphysics. Berkeley, following Locke, analysed all knowledge that is not self-knowledge into what he called ideas, but what we call sensations, or more generally feelings, variously grouped together to form objects and events. Before his time philosophers had ascribed these sensations to the action of an unconscious substance called matter on our minds. It seemed to him that such a theory was unintelligible, or in plainer language, flat nonsense. For when we strip matter of all the sensible attributes formerly supposed to inhere in it, but now known to be merely subjective affections of our own minds, what is left behind? Why, nothing but a pure abstract idea, a formless, colourless, soundless, intangible entity, an occult cause like the chimeras expelled from natural philosophy by modern science. Now, according to Berkeley, there are no abstract ideas; they are a scholastic absurdity. All knowledge is of particulars. For instance, we cannot think of a triangle in general; what we think of is always some portion of space bounded by three straight lines of a definite length. And his reasoning would be just as good were the abstract idea of form substituted for the abstract idea of matter as the essence of the external world.

Yet after all there is an external, objective, independent world; and Berkeley no more denied its reality than did the coxcombs who vanquished him with a grin. The objects and events into which my sensations group themselves constitute a vast coherent framework which does not come and go at my bidding, which was there before I came into it, which will continue to be there when I am gone. How then can it be

dependent on mind? Berkeley says that although the world does not depend on our minds it depends on mind in general, on the one divine mind, which is God. And in this way he proves to his own satisfaction that God exists. Whatever we know we know through him, by participation in his ideas. Had the phenomenon called thought-reading been experienced as widely then as it is supposed to be experienced now, it might have furnished an admirable illustration of the Bishop's meaning. What occasionally happens or is said to happen between human souls—the transference of mental images from one consciousness to another—is continually happening between every single human and even animal soul and the divine soul in which they literally live and move and have their being.

Berkeley did not call God the Eternal Consciousness; but he might in perfect consistency with his philosophy have used that expression, which in fact is Green's. But this consciousness does not fulfil the same office in both systems. Berkeley's divine Spirit must be thought of as carrying in itself the whole extended coloured moving panorama of nature, differing from ours chiefly in this that it visualises the finest atomic dust in its absolute minuteness, and the vastest stellar orbs in their absolute magnitude, that it memorises all past, and foresees all future events. In short, it actualises all the possibilities of sense. Green's 'Eternal Consciousness,' on the other hand, has for its object not the totality of possible sensuous representations, but the totality of thought-relations by which things are constituted as realities and unified into an all-embracing whole. In mathematical language each God is a *locus*, the curve, or rather the surface connecting an infinity of positions; but while with Berkeley he is a *locus* of images, with Green he is a *locus* of conceptions. The distinction involves very serious consequences; for while with the earlier idealist the Divine personality remains intact, with the later idealist it is silently eliminated.

To illustrate Berkeley's theory of human knowledge I have mentioned the phenomenon of thought-reading; but in view of its sensuous character, the technical term telepathy seems a still more suitable expression, implying as it does the transference of simple feelings or images from mind to mind without the intervention of signs. Thought-reading might then be reserved for Green's more intellectual idealism, thought being

understood as the consciousness of relations. Thus, for a finite consciousness, to think and to know would be to enter into communication with the Eternal Consciousness and to appropriate its ideas. There seems at first sight no reason why the two minds, the human and the divine, should not remain as distinct and separate as they are with Berkeley, the more so that Green in speaking of them habitually applies the epithet 'self-distinguishing' to each in turn. It would appear, however, that the subject must be understood as distinguishing itself from what is merely objective, from the phenomenal world, not from other knowing subjects, certainly not from the eternal subject, which is God. On the contrary, with that subject, with that eternal consciousness, it is really identified. This contrast with Berkeleyanism arises, as I have intimated, from the essential difference between images and thoughts. The tendency of images is towards mutual externality, repulsion, and isolation; the tendency of thoughts is towards mutual inclusion and absorption. Again, to be conscious at all is to have a succession of ideas, conceived as successive, and this, according to Green, implies being above succession, which is to be out of time, to be eternal. Now, Green seemed to think, rightly or wrongly, that to assume two or more eternals would be a needless multiplication of entities. If God is a *locus* of thoughts, it seems to follow that he is a *locus* of thinkers as well. Apart from them he becomes, in the language of Green's school, 'a mere abstraction.'

The author of the 'Prolegomena to Ethics' was certainly not a pantheist in the same sense as that in which we call Hegel a pantheist; that is to say, he did not conceive the universe as a self-subsistent, self-contained structure of thought. As a system he held nature to be constituted by the activity of a spiritual substance—of that 'eternal consciousness' about which we have heard so much and understood so little. But for a rationalist as such—may we not add, for a religious believer in God?—the only interesting question is whether he conceived the universal Spirit as having a personal existence. Unfortunately for our curiosity, Green never seems to have particularly cared about this question, or to have been brought to book about it by his friends; and the passages most nearly connected with it in his writings are so ambiguous that to tie

them down to one interpretation seems to involve a sort of logical brutality.[1] Such ambiguity, however, of itself rather countenances a solution in the sense of impersonality. For while there was no reason whatever why a theist should disguise his opinions thirty years ago at Oxford, there seem to have been some good reasons for a certain reticence on the part of a pantheist at the same period. The believer in a personal God is apt to regard heresies on the subject as little if at all removed from atheism; the believer in an impersonal power which makes for good has so much common ground with all ethical religionists that he prefers to put his differences with them out of sight, and all the more so from his consciousness of their intolerance as regards his own formulation of the faith. Besides, he has an extreme dislike to being claimed by the atheists as an authority on their side because he agrees with them on this single point of denying a divine personality, while he agrees with their opponents on every point but that one.

So much being premised, I think we are justified in attaching more significance than at first sight they seem to bear to the words with which Green concludes his general Introduction to Hume's 'Treatise of Human Nature.' There he affirms as the result of his analysis 'that the recognition of a system of nature logically carries with it that of a self-conscious subject . . . which is neither nature nor natural, though apart from it nature would not be—that of which the designation as "mind," as "human," as "personal," is of secondary importance, but which is eternal, self-determined, and thinks.' It is to be feared that in this reference the distinction between what is of 'secondary importance' and what is of no importance at all will be found too subtle for the religious consciousness to seize.

God, or the eternal consciousness, is alone real, it is the 'constant reality of which events are the changing appearance.'[2]

[1] 'If we mean anything else by it [personality] than the quality in a subject of being consciously an object to itself, we are not justified in saying that it necessarily belongs to God and to any being in whom God in any measure reproduces or realises himself' ('Prolegomena to Ethics,' p. 191). This, which I suppose is Green's clearest utterance on the subject, still fails to explain whether the eternal consciousness has a personality apart from the beings in which it 'reproduces or realises' itself.

[2] Green's 'Works,' Vol. I., p. 129.

That is to say, things only become completely real in a complete synthesis, and that complete synthesis is only achieved in the divine consciousness. The law extends to ourselves. As individuals we are mere appearances. 'The self, in the only sense in which it is absolutely real or an ultimate subject, is already God.'[1] At the same time this ultimate reality and source of all knowledge 'is neither real nor knowable in the same sense as is any other object.'[2] This sounds very like the agnosticism of Herbert Spencer, just as Spencer's agnosticism on examination betrayed close affinities with Oriental pantheism.

To an Oriental pantheist there must always be something unnecessary and unaccountable about individual existences. Why should the absolute Ego, being complete in itself, be in any way mixed up with a world of finite and perishable appearances? The answer of European pantheism, especially as formulated by Hegel, is that the World-Spirit only comes to true reality, that is self-consciousness, in man. Green is always trying to combine both points of view; and it is this attempt that gives his philosophy such an air of incoherence and confusion. We are told with endless iteration that the eternal consciousness is not in time, a position which, one would suppose, cut it off from all connexion with creation or evolution. Nevertheless, it 'must be operative in us to produce the gradual development of knowledge;'[3] and 'our knowledge' is constituted by the eternal consciousness 'as so far realised in or communicated to us through modification of the animal organism.'[4] We certainly have an absolute self here, but it takes the form of an absolute self-contradiction. What is out of time and space cannot enter or vary within an animal organism; what is all-embracing cannot be communicated; what is complete cannot be realised.

So much for the idea of God. The idea of immortality fares no better but rather worse under Green's manipulation. Without requiring any specific information on the subject, one readily infers that the human mind, being divided between an animal organism and a communicated divine consciousness, must part with its individual existence on the dissolution of

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 125.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] 'Prolegomena,' p. xiii.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

the organism, preserving only as much reality as belongs to what is confessedly out of time. But here, as it happens, more specific information is forthcoming, although it seems to have been withheld during the author's life. A fragment on the subject tells us that 'the "immortality of the soul" in the only sense of the doctrine in which it is true . . . = the being of God;' and that 'the living agent man, like everything else, is eternal as a determination of thought;'[1]—an almost exact reproduction of Spinoza's teaching. Well might Professor Henry Sidgwick observe that 'Green's philosophy affords no ground for expecting the survival of the individual after bodily death.'[2] Indeed, it affords the strongest grounds for expecting the contrary.

There remains the question of freedom, on which, according to Dr. Stirling, we have to seek comfort from German philosophy. Let us see what Green has to tell us about it. Nominally the decision is in favour of freewill. But the gift is hampered with such qualifications as to deprive it of all value. Man, we learn, is a free cause. But it would seem that he only possesses that dignity by becoming identified with the eternal consciousness, and this, being outside time, can only be called a cause in some sense inapplicable to the things ordinarily known as causes which enter into and are determined by the universal order. As occurring in time our actions belong to that irreversible order; and we ourselves only escape from the same determinism by identifying ourselves as conscious agents with the one supreme reality of which the phenomenal world is a helpless expression. In plainer language, freedom means no more than the power to conceive ourselves as having done something different from what we have actually done. 'A falling stone,' says Spinoza, 'if it were conscious, would believe that it fell by its own choice, that it was free;' to which Schopenhauer adds that in the supposed case the stone really would be free. Now, this and no other freedom is what Green's philosophy leaves us. By self-consciousness we identify ourselves with the universal Spirit or Subject which has the world for its object, and as that is not determined from without, so neither are we. But this immunity from external control is quite compatible with determination by an inward necessity

[1] 'Works,' Vol. III., p. 159.

[2] 'Lectures on Ethics,' p. 62.

not less rigorous than that which the philosophy of Spinoza asserts.[1]

Personally Green was very religious, professing, with unquestionable sincerity, to be a Christian in the genuine and original sense of the word. As tutor of Balliol he even delivered various courses of lectures on New Testament subjects, more unctuous, perhaps, than some sermons preached at St. Mary's. But he seems to have made no secret of his disbelief in the miraculous part of Christianity, nor in such dogmas as imply the existence of a world distinct from that which is ever present to the eternal consciousness, and which is in fact the world of science. Practically there seemed little to distinguish his religious position from that originally occupied by David Strauss, or through life by F. C. Baur, whom he greatly admired. It does not seem to have involved him in any difficulties at Oxford; but outsiders were less easily satisfied. On obtaining an assistant commissionership for enquiring into the state of secondary education in England, towards the end of 1864, the philosopher heard with surprise and annoyance 'that his appointment caused some alarm to the other members of the commission; they had heard that he was "an extreme man, . . . an ultra-liberal in religious opinion."' Green declared that he was not 'an ultra-liberal in religious opinion, in the ordinary sense of the words;' and that he had 'always prided himself on reserve in the expression of his opinions, not with a view to preferment, but from aversion to revolutionary notoriety. That the commissioners should know anything about them,' he adds, 'shows in what an inquisitorial age we live.'[2] In fact, it was the age of the Essayists and Colenso, so that public opinion had reason to be excited about what was called 'neology in the cloister.' And at all times misunderstandings are apt to arise between college dons and the outside world.

T. H. Green's philosophy is a waymark in the retreat of theology, indicating with sufficient clearness the line of positions abandoned, and with less clearness than could be desired, but still to some appreciable extent, the line of positions still

[1] Henry Sidgwick regards 'Green's view as being, for all practical purposes, pure Determinism' ('Lectures,' p. 16).

[2] Memoir prefixed to Vol. III. of Green's 'Works,' p. xlv.

maintained. One cannot say as much about the work which comes next in chronological order, the late Principal Caird's 'Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion' (1880). Green, as I have said, was not a Hegelian in any sense; Caird makes no secret of his general adhesion to Hegel; and Green himself, who reviewed the book favourably, describes it as 'a thorough assimilation of Hegel's "Philosophy of Religion."'[1] If I do not greatly misunderstand the German master, this would amount to calling it a disintegration of Catholic theology equally thorough. Perhaps the Introduction may be such in principle; but if so its true character is not avowed. Nor indeed was it likely to be avowed. If his private opinions were unorthodox, Caird had three very strong reasons for not making them public. He was a Scotchman, he was a Presbyterian minister, and he was Principal of Glasgow University. In other words, he belonged to a people among whose many great qualities sincerity does not take a foremost place, and he occupied a position which made reticence peculiarly desirable. Moreover, his consummate literary skill enabled him to combine such reticence with what looks like a full and free exposition of religious belief. Thanks to his unsparing exercise of this remarkable gift, we lay down the volume without knowing how much, if any, of the popular theology has been abandoned, or how much, if any, has been retained. Questions about the miraculous might perhaps be fairly left out of account in a general discussion on religion; but it may be taken as a sign of the times that a place was not made for them; and indeed so rapid was the movement of opinion that only ten years later Max Müller, lecturing on Natural Religion before Caird's own University of Glasgow, found room for a destructive criticism on miracles as an element of religious belief.[2] The sense of sin and the atonement, which figure so largely in Cardinal Newman's religious philosophy, are not so much as mentioned here.

Hegel's Logic is from one point of view a criticism of Kant's agnosticism; and, as was to be expected, his follower begins with a criticism of Herbert Spencer's Unknowable. We have seen that there was a large pantheistic element in that very

[1] 'Works,' Vol. III., p. 138.

[2] Max Müller, 'Physical Religion,' pp. 337 ff.

heterogeneous compound; and therefore, by taking advantage of Spencer's admissions, it can without much difficulty be developed still further in that direction. Then come adverse criticisms on the principle of mysticism (under the form of intuitive knowledge), and on the principle of authority, as methods of religious belief, with which a rationalist finds himself in complete sympathy, and an attack on materialism which, as such, does not concern his position. It is satisfactory to hear 'that very much of what is anthropomorphic in the form of our religious ideas, receives a silent corrective from the advancing religious consciousness, till finally no suggestion of anthropomorphism remains attached to the language in which such ideas are expressed save what pertains to the truth itself;'[1] only one would be glad to know exactly how much that residual quantity amounts to. At any rate, it does not include God's 'making and revising schemes, contracts, covenants with mutual stipulations and penalties for breach of bargain;'[2]—a rather sweeping elimination, which would seem to cover the entire Biblical revelation, considered under the form of two Covenants, an old and a new. This, of course, is what rationalism has always contended for; and if 'the advancing religious consciousness' rejects such figments, it owes the discovery of their unreality to nothing but the destructive action of reason on what were once religious beliefs, to the perception of their inconsistency with each other, or of their inconsistency with demonstrated truth. There is then, to say the least of it, considerable hardihood in the assertion that anthropomorphism is one of the only two alternatives 'in which the mind can rest when the law of non-contradiction is carried to its logical results.'[3] The magnified non-natural man in the next street can never be a logical alternative to one who fully admits and applies that law. It is true that the words quoted occur in a passage where anthropomorphism is defined—or described—as 'making religion a mere subjective fiction and God the self-imposed illusion of the worshipper's own mind.' It has generally been supposed to mean the exact converse, making subjective fiction, not recognised as such, into religion, and the illusion of the worshipper's own mind into God. Put the other

[1] 'Philosophy of Religion,' p. 183.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 184.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 241.

way, as Principal Caird puts it, what we get is not anthropomorphism but the purest Hegelian philosophy of religion. And that at least does not result from a too scrupulous adherence to the law of non-contradiction, but rather from the new logic, from the identification of contradictories.

Turn we now to the other alternative left for choice to the benighted believers in Aristotle. An equal surprise awaits us here. 'Pantheism, which denies spiritual reality and life to man,' is, it seems, the other horn of the dilemma. One may doubt whether such a form of pantheism ever existed even among Oriental mystics. But to treat such a denial, whether actually maintained or not, as an alternative logically resulting from the law of non-contradiction implies a total misconception of what is meant by contradiction. It implies a confusion between negation, which is an attribute of proposition, and difference, which is an attribute of things. Because mutually contradictory propositions cannot both be true, it does not follow that different things cannot coexist. In fact, it is just the Aristotelian who most strongly insists on their mutual compatibility.

To limit the name of pantheism to one particular phase, and that a doubtful one, of philosophy, to treat it as insulting to human nature, and to throw the responsibility for its absurdities on a logic by which Hegel's pretensions stand condemned, suggests the design of diverting attention from one's own surreptitious adoption of pantheism under another name. Whether Principal Caird entertained such a design I cannot say. But what he calls God seems to be even less perfectly distinguished from the objective world and from the human mind than is the eternal consciousness of Professor Green. He too affirms 'a Consciousness transcending all that is particular and relative,'[1] 'an Absolute Spirit . . . whose thought is the one condition of all finite thought.'[2] But we are cautioned against 'representing God under such notions as "First Cause" or "Creator and Governor of the world."'[3] These notions would, of course, involve the discarded anthropomorphisms of space and time. But they would also suggest an actual or possible divine existence apart from the world and from man. Now, according to the new philosophy,

[1] P. 248. [2] P. 246. [3] P. 244.

that would be a 'false abstraction'—not less false than the other abstraction which professes to conceive the world and man apart from God. Here we come to the vital point of the whole discussion, the *articulus stantis aut cadentis Ecclesiae*. Is God the ideal unity of the soul with the world, or is he something more? On the latter alternative Catholic Christianity might still survive; but then Hegel's philosophy, as understood by Hegel himself, would be wrong. It teaches us that when we have learned to recognise the laws of mind in the laws of nature, and to recognise in consciousness the consummation of nature's eternal process, which is reason's triumphant return on, possession of, and joy in itself, there is nothing more to be known, no other divinity nor hope of immortality than this.

We may put the crucial question a little differently, but without any essential change in its content, by asking, has God any self-consciousness outside the consciousness of man, or of some being organised like man? I find no absolute denial of such a transcendent divine consciousness in Principal Caird, but also no hint that it exists; and when we consider the position of the lecturer, silence becomes almost indistinguishable from denial. Professor T. H. Green seems to have noted this identification of the divine with the human mind as a weakness in Caird's religious philosophy, contrasting it with his own idea of an eternal consciousness, whose thoughts are objective realities—determinations of things—not 'processes of the discursive understanding.'[1] But he seems to consider the distinction rather as it bears on the study of natural law—which for science is certainly all-important—than in reference to purely religious interests. And if the personality of God be, as Green once put it, 'of secondary importance,' so also, in that reference, is the difference between him and Hegel's clerical interpreter.

Principal Caird reaches the very climax of audacious paradox when he comes to define the place and function of religious worship. One would think that there, if anywhere, the contradiction between religious belief and Hegelian philosophy became clear, explicit, and unmistakable. Borrowed as they are from the expressions of courtship addressed by one human being to another, the forms of worship seem expressly calculated to emphasise the personal distinction between God and man.

[1] Green's 'Works,' Vol. III., p. 144.

Yet the true meaning of prayer and praise is, it seems, to assure us of the exact contrary; 'even when we pray that new blessings may be communicated to us, it is because we realise that already all things are ours.' When we pray for spiritual improvement, we have a 'conviction that we are already perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect.'[1] What is this but a confirmation of what I have already said—that to 'make God the self-imposed illusion of the worshipper's own mind,' is not anthropomorphic but Hegelian?

Quite apart from Hegel and from the more or less faithful interpretations put on his philosophy by our academic teachers, pantheism was in the air at this time; and in spite of attempts to capture it in the orthodox interest, its rationalistic associations were not allowed to be forgotten. The same year, 1880, that saw the publication of Principal Caird's Introduction, was also signalised by the appearance of Mr. (now Sir Frederick) Pollock's great work on Spinoza. Its author, an intimate friend of Professor Clifford, wrote in a spirit of ardent sympathy with his hero, and of equally ardent hostility to the theology of his own day. I do not know how far Sir Frederick Pollock would call himself a pantheist, nor indeed whether he would accept the name in any sense. But at any rate he seems to be distinguished from his whole party, with the possible exception of Tyndall, by a certain tinge of Oriental mysticism, not, in my opinion, really characteristic of Spinoza, although it is attributed to him by his expositor. Eminently opportune in its appearance, this work gave pantheism a more distinct representation than it had before enjoyed among the competing varieties of English thought. Thus the dissolution of Herbert Spencer's ill-cemented metaphysical system into its component parts was made complete. Its theism found an expression in 'Supernatural Religion'; its atheism in Clifford and Romanes; its agnosticism in Leslie Stephen; and its pantheism, to the extent here suggested, in Pollock's Spinoza.

Whatever may be the reason of their reluctance, English people do not like to call themselves pantheists. Yet among their great poets, Coleridge and Wordsworth at one time, and Shelley at all times, might very properly have been designated

[1] 'Philosophy of Religion,' p. 302.

by that name. And for some minds pantheism has the advantage of being more compatible with the public profession of Christianity than any other philosophy by which the supernatural is denied. We have seen how Wordsworth, while openly proclaiming his superiority to the idea of a personal God, still professed his readiness to die for the Church of England,[1] and how Coleridge, while advocating the same views in private, publicly put himself forward as her intellectual champion.[2] Jowett and Matthew Arnold placed their reconstruction of religion on the same essential basis, while one was an officiating minister, and the other an unofficial defender of the Establishment. These parallels may help to explain the position of the very remarkable writer to whom we owe the last classic fiction that English literature has produced. I refer to Henry Shorthouse, author of 'John Inglesant,' published in 1881. Religion with Shorthouse was both a personal passion and an artistic dilettantism, but how far it was associated with a fixed form of theological belief is not clear. He certainly showed a very large-hearted comprehensiveness towards believers of all schools; the Puritans of the seventeenth century, whom he could neither appreciate nor understand, being the only objects excluded from his universal charity. Probably what he could not forgive was their exclusiveness. He had not learned from Coleridge that we should tolerate each other's intolerance. Experience proves the compatibility of such an attitude with strict dogmatic standards, but it is still more compatible with their absence. Shorthouse had left the Society of Friends to join the Church of England, and he clung to the Church with the enthusiasm of a convert; but how far this adhesion implied the reasoned acceptance of her beliefs does not appear. His Quaker training does not seem to have left him with very exacting notions of veracity. John Inglesant, the hero of his wonderful romance, spends years of his life in the outward profession of a religion that he does not believe, if indeed belief or unbelief of any kind can be associated with such a gelatinous personality; and his ultimate return to the Anglican community seems to be determined by any motive rather than acceptance of its doctrines as true. Yet the author seems to be persuaded that in the character of Inglesant he is depicting a modern Galahad, the

[1] *Supra*, Vol. I., p. 230.

[2] Vol. I., chap. vi.

ideal not only of a steadfast Christian but also of an English gentleman. Novelists must not of course be made too strictly responsible for their often very odd taste in heroes. But Shorthouse carried the same latitude into modern life. Just at the time when he was first bursting into fame and popularity a rather silly article by one Louis Greg, called 'The Agnostic at Church,' appeared in the 'Nineteenth Century,' representing it as the moral duty of an agnostic, if he lived in the country, to attend Divine service. It was 'not suggested,' however, 'that he should repeat the Creeds, still less offer himself as a communicant.' With the positive part of this proposal Shorthouse 'fully sympathised.' But in a contribution of his own to the same review on the subject he objects to the second restriction. Let the agnostic not only come to church but communicate also. According to the Exhortation he will eat and drink his own damnation; but that is a peril which the amiable novelist leaves out of consideration. As to the objection that by communicating 'the agnostic is supporting a superstitious system against which his conscience rebels,' it is met by the ingenuous retort that 'this system he has already condoned by coming to church; he will hear more superstition from the pulpit than he will ever meet with in the ritual of the sacrament. But in truth he cannot avoid superstition unless he severs himself entirely from his fellow-men. It is deeply engraven in the race.'[1]

Many vices, one fears, are deeply engraven in the race; but that lamentable fatality has never yet been alleged as a reason by serious moralists for relaxing in their condemnation, still less for condoning their indulgence by tacit approval. I am not calling superstition a vice, although the two may be more closely connected than would at first sight appear; what I mean is that the argument from human nature would supply as good a defence for the one as for the other. The important thing, however, to notice is the little reliance we can place on the dogmatic professions of one whose ideas about the relation between appearance and reality were so indistinct. Shorthouse seems, naturally enough, to have detested what he calls 'the free inquiry party,'[2] and he talks about 'Revelation' as if it

[1] 'Life and Letters of J. H. Shorthouse,' pp. 151–153.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 169.

were a granite boulder on the Jura. Yet in writing to an agnostic (who does not seem to have been a communicant) he makes concessions contrasting rather curiously with his professed belief 'that every dogma of Christianity is based on scientific truth.'[1] 'The Old Testament is merely the sacred book of the Hebrews.'[2] 'The New Testament is simply the text-book and historical record of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth and of the early days of Christianity, and is liable, like any other history, to error and mistake.'[3] He accepts 'the fundamental teaching of Jesus,' which is 'belief in Himself as God.'[4] This position, however, is compatible with 'a disbelief in the Incarnation and Resurrection, for Christ may have been Divine though he entered human life in the ordinary way, and never rose from human death.'[5] 'Sin is manifestly and scientifically the following of the *present* instead of the *distant* and *superior* good.'[6] And the latter course seems to be identified with living by faith as opposed to living by sight.

If the unnamed agnostic (who by the way was no true agnostic but a materialist) ever answered Shorthouse, he may have observed that a religion which assumes the authenticity of the speeches in the Fourth Gospel can hardly be called scientific. But we may doubt whether the supposed belief of Jesus in himself as God meant any more for the author of 'John Inglesant' than it meant for the author of the 'Ancient Mariner.' Coleridge told Crabb Robinson that 'when Christ spoke of his identity with the Father, he spoke in a pantheistic or Spinozistic sense.' Shorthouse read Pollock's Spinoza with delight, and he quotes its philosophy with approval. He describes Platonism as victoriously asserting an eternal element in things, 'an abstract idea which exists only in the pure intellect.' 'This' he declares to be 'the true eternal life.' The world of Platonic ideas is 'none other than the all-perfect, all-containing intellect, the mind of God.'[7] Spinoza believed 'in a God who exists within human consciousness alone. Dr. James Martineau says that this belief is atheism, and Mr. Frederick Pollock that it is not.'[8] John Inglesant's Jesuitism

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 203.
[2] P. 90.
[3] P. 91.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] P. 92.
[6] P. 93.
[7] 'Literary Remains of J. H. Shorthouse,' p. 241.
[8] *Op. cit.*, p. 315.

seems to reflect the Christianity of his creator. This is to Christ what Jesuitism was to Jesus.

It may be remembered how the ironical Muse of history illustrated the entrance of Hegel and Comte into Oxford life, and the expulsion of theology from science in Mill's 'Logic,' by the contemporary trial and imprisonment of Mr. Holyoake for atheism. A more grotesque commentary on the idealism of T. H. Green, J. Caird, and Shorthouse was supplied by the episode of Charles Bradlaugh and the Parliamentary oath. Bradlaugh has been called a Spinozist, incorrectly as it would seem.[1] He had been a close student of Spinoza, but only agreed with his philosophy on the positive side to the extent of being a monist. A closer agreement would probably not have affected his hostile attitude towards Christianity and theism. Like Shelley, he emphasised this hostility by calling himself an atheist, while others as far gone in negation, preferred the less aggressive titles of agnostic and secularist. Bradlaugh thought the popular theology not only false but mischievous, and carried on a popular propaganda against it by means of lectures and pamphlets. Professor Flint, who is very well read in the subject, gives it as his opinion that 'most of the writers who are striving to diffuse atheism in literary circles are not to be compared in intellectual strength with either Mr. Holyoake or Mr. Bradlaugh.'[2] It would seem then that their arguments ought to be given a place in this work. But I do not find that they have made any addition to the rationalism of Hume and Mill, nor that they have influenced the general trend of English opinion on the subject. Their importance for us lies in what they expressed rather than in what they thought. As an illustration of how opinion was moving, it is significant that when Bradlaugh stood for Northampton in 1868 his name was publicly associated by a high-class Liberal journalist with that of Broadhead, the Sheffield assassin, that he then received over a thousand fewer votes than the less popular of the two successful candidates, and that a subscription to his election expenses contributed to Mill's defeat at Westminster in the

[1] 'Life of Charles Bradlaugh,' Vol. II., p. 122 (this part is written by Mr. J. M. Robertson, who quotes and corrects the statement in question).

[2] 'Anti-Theistic Theories,' p. 520.

same general election. In 1880 Bradlaugh had incurred fresh odium by his share in the publication of an offensive neo-Malthusian pamphlet, an act for which he was criminally prosecuted, and would have suffered six months' imprisonment but for a technical irregularity in the proceedings against him. Nevertheless religious prejudice had by this time so far abated that on again presenting himself for election at Northampton he was returned second on the poll by a majority of 675 over the higher of the two Conservative candidates.[1] Then began a long and weary struggle in the House of Commons, first on the question of whether the new member should be allowed to substitute an affirmation for an oath, then, on the refusal of the House to permit this relief, whether he should be allowed to take the oath after admitting that the name of God had no meaning for him, and finally how he should be treated after administering the oath to himself. As a result of this conflict, in the course of which neither the hostile majority nor its victim greatly distinguished themselves for dignity of behaviour, the seat for Northampton was three times vacated, and on each occasion Bradlaugh was re-elected, in 1881 by a majority of only 132, in 1882 by only 108, but in 1884 'by 368 more than the Tory, who was 24 below the last Tory vote.' At the general election of 1885 this figure received a further increase, his majority being then 425. On this occasion also a number of his opponents lost their seats, being deserted 'by former supporters on the express ground of their votes in the Northampton question.'[2] By decision of the Speaker, Bradlaugh was allowed to take the oath and his seat in the new House. Re-elected for the Parliament of 1886, he carried a bill two years afterwards by which members who objected to being sworn were enabled to substitute an affirmation for the oath of allegiance. Finally the resolutions excluding him from the House of Commons were expunged from its records without a dissentient vote, just before his death in January, 1891.

Through the whole of this struggle Bradlaugh received the support of many pious Christians, while some of his bitterest opponents were suspected of sharing his religious unbelief. But when the fundamental issue has been disentangled from all disturbing elements, it cannot, I think, be doubted that his final

[1] 'Life,' Vol. II., p. 210.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 359–60.

success betokens a victory of reason over authority, if not of rationalism over faith.

Whatever T. H. Green's and Hegel's disciples may have thought about the good taste and expediency of Bradlaugh's iconoclasm, they must have felt that their principles involved the rejection of the popular theology not less completely than his, and that the conflict must before long become irrepressible. None of them as yet spoke out. But a brilliant young neo-Hegelian Tutor of Jesus College, Oxford, David Ritchie, afterwards well known as Professor Ritchie of St. Andrew's University, was jotting down in his private note-book certain ominous reflexions, not given to the world till some twenty years later, after his recent lamented death. To the question, 'Do you believe in God?' he answers: 'If by God be meant a gigantic human being, thought of as an absolute monarch, living somewhere up in the sky and governing the universe according to a capricious and changeable will, it is a pious duty to deny such a God, however much he may be concealed under venerable creeds and clothed in consecrated associations. If such be God, the pious man, if he have any intelligence and education, must needs be an atheist. Any conception of God which approximates to such an imagination must just in so far provoke and require indignant disbelief.'[1]

It seems doubtful whether Ritchie would have accepted even a deity from whose character all objectionable anthropomorphisms had been removed. 'Religion,' as he defines it, 'is the sense of communion with *all* men through God, *i.e.* through the highest or ideal good.'[2] Such a religion involves no supernatural belief, and therefore evades rationalistic attacks to the same extent as Schleiermacher's theology. It also leaves the question of individual immortality in abeyance. According to Ritchie, what is best for us will happen, though on what reasonable foundation this optimism rests is not clear.

Ritchie's life seems to have been somewhat embittered by the reticence which his position as a teacher imposed on him. No such difficulties have hampered another and far abler

[1] Ritchie's 'Philosophical Studies,' p. 230.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 252.

member of the Hegelian school, Mr. F. H. Bradley, in the expression of his religious opinions. For although this very daring thinker has found himself debarred to a certain extent from the discussion of religion, the impediments seem to be created solely by the ophelistic prejudice of the English mind. That a man should treat of God and religion in order merely to understand them, and apart from the influence of some other consideration and inducement, is, he justly observes, 'to many of us in part unintelligible, and in part also shocking.'[1] Such limitations, however, are not peculiar to England; and perhaps their stringency is becoming relaxed at a more rapid rate in England than on the Continent. When Mr. Bradley first published that complaint in 1893, English thought enjoyed considerably more freedom than it had been allowed ten years earlier, and since then there has been a still greater gain. The work where the words quoted occur, 'Appearance and Reality,' is remarkable in many ways, and not least remarkable for its free handling of the metaphysics of religion. If I referred to what the author has to say in this connexion for purposes of criticism, there would be a certain unfairness in detaching it from his general philosophy; but for historical purposes such a procedure seems unobjectionable. At the same time, as with T. H. Green, a general indication of how the subject connects itself with his main argument may conduce to the clearness and interest of the exposition.

If we define rationalism as the destructive application of reason to religious belief, then Mr. Bradley's philosophy lends itself easily to rationalistic purposes, but with rather embarrassing liberality, for it involves the destructive application of reason to all the beliefs represented by particular propositions. According to him any such assertion as 'here I am,' 'there is a tree,' or 'snow is white,' involves a self-contradiction; and not only these simple judgments, but far more extensive and complicated systems of belief, where the one-sidedness of each particular aspect under which truth reveals itself seems to be corrected and complemented by the inclusion of other aspects. So far indeed is this dialectic dissolution of appearances pushed that parodists have called his work 'the Disappearance of Reality.' Mr. Bradley's scepticism, however, is not complete,

[1] F. H. Bradley, 'Appearance and Reality,' p. 450.

and merely amounts to saying that the sole absolute reality is the unified whole, and that the parts are unreal only in so far as they are falsely viewed in detachment from this whole. Now it might seem as if such a method, so far from helping rationalism, rather discouraged it. 'You see now,' it might be urged, 'what comes of pushing reason to an extreme. Not only religious belief, but all belief melts away under our hands.' Or again it might be contended that the supreme reality, the Absolute to which dialectic leads us up, is no other than God, in whom, after many wanderings, our thoughts find rest at last. Such, however, is not the case; and the historical importance of 'Appearance and Reality,' in connexion with rationalism, is proved not least by its exclusion of all such apologetics. True, Mr. Bradley himself points out that the self-contradictory nature of religion places it at no disadvantage as compared with any other form of experience. Indeed there are other appearances with which it compares advantageously. There are degrees of truth and reality; and measured on that scale religion ranks very high. If its doctrines are not ultimate truth, so neither are the principles of physical science. Yet these are valid because they work. 'Why then,' we may ask, 'are such working ideas not enough for religion?' Mr. Bradley tells us that it is because in the sciences we know what we want, while in religion we do not know, or do not agree about 'the end for which the doctrines are required.'[1] And English theologians have not the metaphysical training which is an indispensable qualification for entering on such an enquiry. It is even hinted that they have not the requisite historical learning. For if they knew more or took the thing more seriously, they would not assume that belief in a personal God is necessary for the purposes of religion.[2]

It is our duty, said Mansel, to believe that God is absolute, and also our duty to believe that he is personal. James Martineau accepted the personality without the absoluteness. Green and the Hegelians accepted, as would seem, the absoluteness without the personality. Mr. Bradley is particularly emphatic in his rejection of the last alternative. 'If you identify the Absolute with God, that is not the God of religion.' 'God is but an aspect, and that must mean but an appearance

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 451. [2] Pp. 452–3.

of the Absolute.' That is because religion involves a relation between him and the soul, and every relation involves a self-contradiction in both its terms. The religious consciousness feels this contradiction, and tries to get rid of it by making God all in all. 'Hence, short of the Absolute, God cannot rest, and having reached that goal, he is lost and religion with him.'[1]

The Absolute itself bears a distinct family resemblance to Spencer's Unknowable, particularly in the point of being, if anything, 'super-personal.' What that precisely means I am not concerned to ask, only mentioning it because the subject gives Mr. Bradley occasion to make some very pertinent remarks on the 'intellectual dishonesty of those who insist on what they call "the personality of God."' 'They desire,' he says, 'a person much like themselves, with thoughts and feelings limited and mutable in the process of time.' The dishonesty is, not to say so openly, but to set about proving the personality of the Deity in quite another sense, a sense which for their purposes makes it totally worthless. 'Once give up your finite and mutable person, and you have parted with everything which, for you, makes personality important.' For himself 'a person is finite or meaningless.'[2] So far as regards the first article of theology, such a conclusion does not seem to realise Dr. Stirling's promise of the benefits to be reaped from Hegel's philosophy.

About immortality Mr. Bradley is equally explicit. He had no desire to speak on the subject, and the first edition of 'Appearance and Reality' left his opinion doubtful. Public curiosity forced him to declare it in the second edition. Complaints have often been made, not without justice, that this writer's style is obscure; but there is no obscurity here. 'A personal continuance is possible, and it is but little more.' 'The balance of hostile probability seems so large that the fraction on the other side to my mind is not considerable.' The ophelistic arguments are worthless. 'If our religion and our morality will not work without it, so much the worse for them.'[3] 'If human beings now are in such a condition that they must deteriorate' unless they 'believe what is probably untrue,' then they had better 'make way for another race

[1] P. 447. [2] Pp. 532–3. [3] P. 507.

constituted more rationally and happily.'[1] Spiritualism, as associated with 'the monstrous results of modern *séances*,' is 'a discreditable superstition.'[2] And 'the conclusion arrived at seems the result to which the educated world, on the whole, is making its way.'[3]

I am not acquainted with the writings, if any, in which Mr. Bradley has addressed himself directly to Kant's third question, the reality of freewill. But his whole philosophy seems to exclude such a belief. The self to which Kant ascribed a transcendent reality, is for him one appearance among many, ultimately determined, like everything else, by that sole reality which he calls the Absolute. Causation is, of course, no more than an appearance; but not more so in the series of mental states than in the series of physical states; and the notion that reality reveals itself 'within the self as force or will' comes in for a double share of the author's contempt.[4] Besides, the moral law has not that transcendent value in his system which would require the law of causation to be suspended in its favour.

Hegelians may, if they like, regard Mr. Bradley as an outsider; and in fact his philosophy sometimes gives one the impression of being a veiled compromise between Spencerian agnosticism and Hegel, with the Unknowable rechristened as the Absolute, and the relativity of all knowledge reproduced as the dialectic dissolution of Appearance. Such a transition was greatly facilitated by Spencer's own attempt to combine Hume and Mill with as much of German pantheism as had reached him through Mansel's Bampton Lectures. Practically all these delicate gradations and subtle blendings of colour work out in the same complete obliteration of orthodox theology, a truth confirmed, if confirmation were wanting, by the publication in the very same year with 'Appearance and Reality' of Professor Edward Caird's 'Evolution of Religion.' The author, who has since succeeded Jowett as Master of Balliol, is a younger brother of Principal Caird, and like him a Hegelian, but not like him under the restraint of the clerical profession. The result is that the ideas they hold in common are carried to a much greater distance towards their only logical consequences.

[1] P. 509. [2] P. 507. [3] P. 510. [4] P. 115.

With none of Mr. Bradley's aggressive pugnacity, there is little less than his decisiveness of grasp, the iron hand of Jena being everywhere felt under the velvet glove of Glasgow.

Passing over the more purely philosophical and historical portions of the work, as things with which, however interesting in themselves, our present enquiry does not deal, we come to an important though too summary note 'on the Unity of Pantheism and Monotheism.'[1] Here, for a wonder, we find a Scottish Hegelian facing the question of the *Personality of God*. But it is not very squarely faced. However, after some rather shuffling references to the legal use of the term person, we have it repeated under the seemingly equivalent expression, 'whether God—the ultimate principle of unity in the universe—is to be regarded as an intelligent or self-conscious Being.' Modern Idealism, Professor Caird tells us, has been charged with a tendency towards dissolving the individuality of God—and of man—into a universal impersonal thought. And indeed there would be no escaping such a catastrophe did not the principle of evolution come to the rescue. In the circumstances evolution does not seem a very promising ally, for nothing can be more alien to its spirit than the notion of starting with a self-contained, perfect Being. An evolutionist thinks of perfection, if at all, as the end, not as the beginning of things. The Eternal Consciousness of T. H. Green and the Absolute of Mr. Bradley are not given by evolution; they are not in time, or, as the profane might say, they nowhere and never exist. Nobody, however, who knows anything of neo-Hegelian methods will be surprised to hear that Professor Caird welcomes evolution just because it rids us of the incubus of an absolute substance. True, he identifies that with the God of Spinoza and Spencer, overlooking obvious applications to the Deity of popular theology. Anyhow, the reconciling interpretation is that 'nature comes to self-consciousness in man, and therefore the process of man's life is a continuation of the self-revelation of the Absolute Being which begins in nature.'[2] This view is supposed to save the idea of 'a living God in whose image man is made.'[3] It seems to harmonise better with the belief, held by every materialist, that the human mind was evolved from an

[1] 'The Evolution of Religion,' Vol. II., pp. 82–4.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 84. [3] *Ibid.*

unconscious substance by the unconscious forces of nature. Hegel did not accept the theory of man's animal descent; and the effect of incorporating it with his philosophy is a still closer approximation to the teaching of the Enlightenment.

So far as I know, Professor Caird has not given his opinion on the question of freewill, nor perhaps in this connexion does it greatly concern us. But his views on immortality are stated with sufficient explicitness, and they are of great importance in reference to the subject of this chapter—the retreat of theology. He does not discuss the hope of a future life, like Mr. Bradley, as a matter of fact, as something that is or is not true, but as a religious value, as a belief which does or does not help the spiritual life. And from this point of view he either condemns the belief, or dismisses it as irrelevant, holding that such also was the true teaching of Christ himself. Those who remained unconvinced by the Law and the Prophets would be equally unconvinced by the return of a dead man to life, either in the body or as a spiritual apparition. For God is the God of the living, not of the dead. Eternal life, which alone religion values, means the consciousness of God, who, as we have seen, is not a person except through his identification with ourselves. In this reference what Arthur Clough said in disparagement of early nineteenth-century pietism[1] comes back to us with the emphasis and authority of systematised ideal philosophy. 'The belief in immortality may easily become an unhealthy occupation with a future salvation, which prevents us from seeking for salvation for mankind here. . . . If the empirical evidences of a future life . . . have for some of us lost their convincing power, this, in a religious point of view, may not be altogether a loss. . . . The spiritual may gain all that the supernatural has lost.'[2]

It is hardly necessary to observe that a religious philosopher who so calmly accepts the destructive action of reason on what were once religious beliefs, acquiesces equally in the disappearance of more distinctly Catholic dogmas. 'Jesus was constantly struggling against the crude supernaturalism of his day; sought persistently to silence the report of wonder-working that attended him; and refused with indignation and scorn

[1] *Supra*, p. 51.

[2] 'The Evolution of Religion,' Vol. II., p. 243.

to demand for a sign from heaven.'[1] Unfortunately 'we see him through the medium of modes of conception vitally opposed to the spirit of his teaching,' and responsible for 'such an absurd and portentous story as that of the Gadarene miracle.' 'The idea of an absolute power of evil' not existing 'with a view to a greater good . . . must ultimately be set aside by the development of his thought.'[2] It needs no development to get rid of creation. 'Jesus altogether sets aside the old Jewish conception of the outward world as an external instrument called into existence to fulfil the divine designs.'[3] He claims to be the Son of God only that he may claim the same sonship for man.[4] St. Paul was less advanced, and indeed on some points quite mistaken. With him begins 'a kind of separation of Christ from humanity and a kind of identification of him with God which is practically . . . a denial of the distinctive title which Christ gave himself as the Son of Man,' speaking of him as having come down from heaven in a way which 'seems to deny that union between the human and the divine which was . . . the gospel of Jesus.'[5] However, with his usual Hegelian optimism, the lecturer proves —and indeed his dialectic can prove anything—that this and even worse distortions of the Christian spirit, due to its interpenetration with Greek philosophy, all worked out for the best, and realised that spirit as nothing else could have realised it.

The development of implicit into explicit truth, or more generally of possibility into actuality, may or may not be the law of all evolution. At any rate, what is more important for us, it seems to be the law of Hegelianism in its application to English religious thought. To borrow the more homely language of the Gospel, with Principal Caird we see the new wine poured into the old bottles, with his brother the bottles begin to crack, with Hegel's next interpreter, Dr. McTaggart, the bottles burst. The very eminent writer and thinker whom I have named is a Cambridge man, and his writings belong to the very end of the nineteenth century, circumstances which may have contributed in equal amounts to his most refreshing freedom and simplicity of expression. It is a remarkable and,

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 168. [2] P. 114. [3] P. 123.
[4] P. 139. [5] P. 214.

for me, a peculiarly fortunate coincidence that his incontrovertible disclosure of the real relations between Hegelianism and Christianity should have come just when it did; for it so happens that the chronological limit of the present work marks also the exhaustion of a particular vein of thought.

Dr. McTaggart's contributions to the subject fall under two heads. The first relates to what Hegel personally believed about religion.[1] The second relates to the religious beliefs which, in his opinion, may be established, irrespective of Hegel's authority, by an unprejudiced application of the dialectic method.[2]

Hegel did not believe in a personal God. He talks about the Trinity as if it were a doctrine expressing the highest philosophic truth. But what he calls by that name differs widely from the Trinity of dogmatic theology, and only serves to designate the three stages by which all reality evolves itself from pure thought. So far from their being equal, the second term surpasses the first, and the third term (Spirit) surpasses the second, and if this last be not personal, none are. But the Absolute Spirit cannot be personal, for it consists of a number of persons united by love.[3] Hegel accepts the historical Jesus as a type of the second stage, the exhibition of pure thought as embodying itself in the external world and in man. But this is merely a concession to the need felt by ordinary minds for a concrete individual representation of the idea; it involves no recognition of moral perfection in Jesus Christ. That he was chosen to fill the unique position of incarnate God resulted from the peculiar character of his teaching, combined with the historical circumstances in which he lived.[4] Hegel's ethics also have only as much in common with Christianity as all civilised systems of morality have in common with one another; and on some important points they differ widely from the Christian view. Social utility, not individual conscience, is their guiding principle. Intellect counts for at least as much as virtue. Hegel would supplement the popular notion that a knave is a fool with the much less welcome notion that 'every fool is more or less a knave.'[5] And it is only by

[1] 'Studies in Hegelian Cosmology,' chap. viii.
[2] *Op. cit.*, chap. ii.
[3] Pp. 199–214. [4] Pp. 215–29. [5] P. 242.

reasoning that any knowledge of God can be acquired. It in spite of these momentous divergencies Hegel accepted Christianity, it was probably because no other religion comes so near his philosophy. But for all that the two remain incompatible. 'Hegelianism supports Christianity against all attacks but its own, and then reveals itself as an antagonist all the more deadly because it works not by denial but by completion.'[1]

According to Dr. McTaggart, Hegel believed in the immortality of the soul,[2] but took no particular interest in it—a fact explained by his general indifference to the individual as such. His interpreter, on the contrary, is greatly interested in it, believing both that the soul is immortal, and that its immortality may be established by the dialectic method, which he accepts. It seems to be admitted that the argument for our continued existence after death goes nearly as far, if not quite as far, to prove our existence through the whole of past time, whether that be finite or infinite. But to grant that is to grant that such an immortality does not include the memory of our former existences; and this, in the opinion of many, would make it unmeaning or worthless. For reasons which do not here concern us, Dr. McTaggart takes a contrary view, holding that it makes an enormous difference to the individual whether he can look forward to such a survival or not. But if we consider the extent of his general agreement with Mr. Bradley's philosophy of the Absolute, and of their disagreement on this particular application of it, the value of their idealism as a support to the popular religion will, I think, appear very small.

As regards the Absolute, Dr. McTaggart accepts and makes explicit Hegel's implicit denial of its personality. Here his breach with the ordinary religious belief is more complete than Herbert Spencer's or Mr. Bradley's. For he rejects the suggestion that the Absolute may be something higher than a person as unmeaning. Each of its differentiations is a person,

[1] P. 251.

[2] I have carefully examined the passages instanced in proof of this assertion ('Philosophie der Religion,' I., 79, II., 268, 313, 495), and must say that they impress me very strongly as showing that Hegel neither believed in the immortality of the soul nor wished any one to suppose that he believed in it.

nor could it exist were this not so, while neither could the differentiations exist without it, which is their unity. 'To ask which of the two is the higher is as unmeaning as to ask whether the state or the citizen is higher.'[1] And 'at any rate the belief in a personal Absolute is nearly as far removed from the historical belief in God as is the belief in an impersonal Absolute.'[2] 'However much the dependence of the human being may be emphasised in the popular religion, there never seems any tendency to include him in the deity.'[3] This is both perfectly true, and also a valuable indirect criticism on Principal Caird's idea that public worship represents the consciousness of identity between the worshipper and his God. Finally, Dr. McTaggart concludes with refreshing frankness by saying that 'the Absolute is not God, and, in consequence, there is no God.'[4]

Our long and, it is to be feared, somewhat tedious review of the neo-Hegelians in their relation to religious belief here comes to a close. The reader has now an opportunity of judging for himself how far Dr. Stirling's sanguine hopes from German philosophy have been realised. But our experience of idealism does more than convict one eminent thinker of being mistaken in his hopes. It proves that the whole antithesis between theism and materialism is a mistake, if it be understood to imply that none but those who limit reality to material existence discard the belief in a personal God. For the history of German philosophy since Kant, and more particularly of Hegel's philosophy, shows that idealism in its purest form issues in the same negation, just as Descartes led on to Spinoza, and Berkeley to Hume. And precisely the same remark applies to the supposed dilemma between Christianity and agnosticism, or between theology and physical science. A Hegelian sets no limit to our knowledge; least of all does he limit it to what we can see or feel; for him the universe is penetrable to thought, *is* thought; but a thought which only becomes conscious of itself in the human mind. A neo-Hegelian accepts the conclusions of science as to the history of the physical universe, with the proviso that they are to be interpreted by an ultimate reference to consciousness. Only by an unlucky inversion of the expected

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 87.
[2] Table of Contents, p. xi.
[3] P. 92.
[4] P. 94.

arrangement, what was first in the order of thought comes last in the order of nature. A single letter of the alphabet conveys this momentous distinction. The world does not come *from* consciousness but *for* consciousness. Theism has signed a treaty with idealism without observing this fatal omission of the letter *m*. And that letter carries with it a world.

Many years before it had been proclaimed that the Absolute was impersonal, and that there was no God, English theism had fallen back on the arguments of Paley's 'Natural Theology.' Thanks largely to the attacks of religious believers on Darwin, many persons supposed that natural selection was fatal to those arguments, and that the acceptance of evolution would necessitate their abandonment. Temple's Bampton Lectures on 'The Relations between Religion and Science,' delivered in 1884, had for their object to reassure timid minds on this score, and to show that the doctrine of evolution left Christianity stronger than before. At that time Temple was Bishop of Exeter, and, for a Bishop, his liberality is most creditable—much more so indeed than his contribution to 'Essays and Reviews' had been to him as Headmaster of Rugby. His acceptance of evolution, diluted though it be with a large allowance of superstition, still marks a stage in the retreat of theology, and caused some scandal among the stalwarts on his own side. Nothing can be clearer, neater, or more convincing than his statement of the evidence on which the doctrine of transformism rests. But nothing can be more futile than his attempt to reconcile it not only with natural but also with revealed religion. Like others of his class, he cannot or will not see the enormous difference between such a theory as that of the 'Vestiges' and the theory of natural selection. The one is compatible with designing intelligence, the other is not. Robert Chambers left Paley pretty much where he stood. That indeed was on very slippery ground, and a remark of Paley's own brings out the danger of his position with startling clearness. Illustrating the argument from design by the example of a watch picked up on a heath by a passing traveller, 'he points out that the evidence of design is certainly not lessened if it be found that the watch was so constructed that in course of time it produced another watch like itself.' Temple observes 'that we may go a step

further and say that we should certainly not believe it a proof that the watch had come into existence without design if we found that it produced in course of time not merely another watch but a better.'[1] What we should believe or disbelieve if impossibilities happened is hard to conjecture. Meanwhile Paley's whole argument is ruined by the fact that neither watches nor any manufactured articles are found to reproduce themselves. The obvious inference is that whereas these do not grow but are made, organisms are not made but grow. The fact that they reproduce themselves may not tell us how they first originated, but it strongly suggests that they did not originate in the way inferred by Paley.

Nor is that all. Whatever presumption as to its maker's intelligence the supposed prolific watch might afford by producing a better watch would surely be annulled were it to discover the bad habit of producing a much larger number of bad watches, including many that would not go at all. We should certainly ask why such an ingenious workman as we were at first ready to infer had recourse to such a clumsy method of improving his manufactures, and why he did not at once turn out a perfect chronometer, the production of which would surely have cost him much less thought and labour. And if this preposterous plan of leaving his timekeepers to improve themselves by trial and error involved not only waste and delay but also pain, we should call the method as cruel as it was clumsy. As Lange justly observes, 'if a man, in order to shoot a hare, fired off millions of gun-barrels in all directions on a great moor; if in order to get into a locked-up room he bought ten thousand keys of all sizes and shapes and tried them all; if in order to obtain a house he built a city and abandoned the superfluous houses to wind and weather,—no one, I suppose, would call such action an example of design, and much less should we suppose that in this procedure there lay any higher wisdom, recondite reasons, and superior skill.'[2] How can that be quoted to prove the existence of creative intelligence which, given the known laws of nature, would equally happen were no such intelligence to exist?

[1] 'The Relations between Religion and Science,' pp. 111–2.

[2] 'Geschichte des Materialismus,' Vol. II., p. 246. The translation is that given by James Martineau, with a few verbal changes.

In fact, Temple abandons Paley's ground and falls back for evidence of design on what Romanes calls the higher teleology, the properties by which the material elements have been enabled to evolve our bodies and the world in which we live. But he leaves us without a proof that these bodies have not always existed, or, assuming them to have had a beginning, that they cannot have been spontaneously evolved from some simpler state of matter. His argument probably would have been that, whatever was the original state of matter, it must have been somehow related to human consciousness, and therefore itself a creation of consciousness. But this would be to solve one problem by starting another. If the relation of actual matter to potential consciousness requires to be accounted for, so also does the relation of an actual divine consciousness to uncreated but potential matter.

At this stage the argument from freewill intervenes. It figures to a certain extent in Temple's Lectures, belief in free-will appearing indeed at the very outset as the sole source and sanction of our belief in causation. But the idea first received its full development under the hands of a far abler theologian, James Martineau, whose great defence of theism appeared four years later, in 1888, under the title of 'A Study of Religion.' I say great in a literary sense, for the work has, in my opinion, not much philosophical value. But as no better contribution to the conservative side has been made, it must receive some notice here.

In an earlier chapter of this work I defined Martineau's position as the chief of that Unitarian and Broad Church array whose criticisms on the dominant Evangelical theology led up to the great explosion of 1860. His mind, being critical far more than constructive, was well fitted for that sort of warfare, in which his copious and picturesque rhetoric gave him an additional advantage. In 'A Study of Religion,' where another method would have been more appropriate, he exercises the same destructive criticism, this time on more advanced thinkers than himself, with the same decorative adjuncts of pulpit oratory, always dazzling, but sometimes also a little fatiguing. Amid the endless attacks on agnostics, positivists, pantheists, Darwinians, and the like, it becomes difficult to disentangle the writer's own theory of the universe, which, after all, seems

recommended to our favour by the failure of its rivals rather than by any adequacy of its own to explain the facts.

The leading idea is, as I have said, the existence of freewill. Temple had used freewill also, but with such extreme economy as to suggest a suspicion that he had no great belief in its tenability. 'In fact the will, though always free, only asserts its freedom by obeying duty in spite of inclination.'[1] And as the conflict with inclination is often limited to a single struggle, after which conscience reigns unopposed, the number of derogations to uniform sequence remains infinitesimally small, and the consciousness of freedom which accompanies all our actions is practically illusory. With Martineau, on the contrary, this consciousness is everything. He is even ready to maintain its incalculableness against the divine foreknowledge. There is no cause but volition; whatever happens is the effect of some volition, either human or divine. By an obvious and irresistible inference we pass from the consciousness of our own spontaneous activity to the recognition of the external world as the expression of a similar activity exercised by Gods or by a God,—a frank adoption of primitive man's point of view. Such a theism will hardly appeal to those who find the cumulative argument for determinism—not like Henry Sidgwick almost, but quite—overwhelming. But even believers in freewill may think the reasoning too rapid. If their own determinations are uncaused, why need the movements of matter be caused? And granting them to be caused, their regularity seems to class them as something quite distinct from voluntary agency. That was Comte's ground for not believing in God; and his position remains perfectly unassailable by anything Martineau can advance.

Assuming, what there is no reason, but the contrary, for believing, that the forces of nature are so many manifestations of freewill, there is no reason, but the contrary, for believing them to be expressions of one and the same divine Will. For on Martineau's interpretation of theism the divine Will must, presumably, be self-conscious. Now that implies that from the first—which with God means from all eternity—it shall have experienced opposition. At least Martineau tells us that 'nothing gets known except through its negation, and . . . we

[1] 'Relations between Religion and Science,' p. 90.

first become alive to our agency by more or less losing it against impediments.'[1] We ourselves, according to him, first acquire that consciousness by encountering the resistance of external objects which, again according to him, are so many divine volitions. But by parity of reasoning, God could not become conscious of himself until his will collided with ours. The voluntarist theory set up in opposition to Hegel's intellectualist pantheism works out to the same result, namely, that God becomes self-conscious through man. What is more, the voluntarist theory exhibits the evolution of God in the world as carried on by the same process of self-contradiction as the evolution of Hegel's God. For the counteraction of one physical force by another is a phenomenon of constant occurrence through the whole field of nature, conditioning all order and all progress. To science there is nothing self-contradictory about this opposition, but it becomes a self-contradiction in the logical sense when we interpret all forces as modes of a single will.

If Martineau approached the idealists in one direction, he approached the opposite school of philosophy in another. What Macaulay has said—not, in my opinion, very happily—of Shelley may be applied without reserve, or with the change of just one word, to the great Unitarian theologian. His strong imagination made him—not indeed an idolater, but—a materialist in his own despite. His insistence on the objective reality and independence of space led to his making it co-eternal with God. Combined with the interpretation of force as will, this led to a rather grotesque theory of creation. 'The Supreme Will can operate by planting out force in space,'[2]—that is to say, by planting out portions of itself. This out-Herods Herod. Planting out is a process which can only be made intelligible by reference to such material things as trees and colonies. But no materialist has ever conceived it possible to plant out slips of his own will. Such crassness was reserved for ultra-spiritual theology.

James Martineau's metaphorical style is infectious. I may therefore be excused for saying that our natural theologian only saves himself from the metaphysical ocean of self-contradiction

[1] 'A Study of Religion,' Vol. I., p. 201

[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 415.

by landing on the quicksand of the argument from design, there joining hands with Dr. Temple. His acceptance of evolution, however, is less frank. The Darwinian theory lays itself open to criticism at various points, and of these openings he takes full advantage. But as his own theodicy debars him from admitting supernatural interference with the processes of natural causation, one fails to see what purpose his criticisms serve. To prove Darwin wrong merely postpones the scientific explanation of biological facts, it does not prove theism true.

After all, what Temple and Martineau both rely on is the moral proof of God's existence, the method of Mansel and Newman. Temple indeed gives away his case by calling God the personification of the moral law, and identifying the eternal law with the Eternal himself.[1] Personified abstractions do not exist; and the religion of pagan Rome stood self-condemned by exhibiting them as objects of worship. And in the case of duty this ought to be particularly clear, for there we have, so to speak, the square root of a negative quantity. The Muse of Astronomy at least symbolised something that actually existed while remaining herself a figment. But the moral law is essentially ideal, representing not what conduct is but what it ought to be. 'The universe,' says Temple, 'as we see it, is not holy, nor just, nor good, nor right.'[2] From such a state of things the logical inference is not that a Power capable of enforcing the moral law exists, but, on the contrary, that it does not exist. It may be urged that the moral law, not having been suggested by experience, must have been supernaturally revealed, thereby proving the reality of its divine source. But the fact of evolution, on this side known long before Darwin, at once intervenes to dissipate such an illusion. History teaches that the aggregate of ethical principles now acknowledged by civilised nations grew up very slowly and in obedience to the necessities of social existence. Temple is quite aware of this fact, and aware also that the Israelites, whom he believes to have been favoured with a special revelation of God's purposes, were no exception to the rule. Of course he gets out of the difficulty by vague phrases about 'progressive revelation.' But any one except an apologist would

[1] 'Relations between Religion and Science,' p. 57.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

see that a progressive revelation which at any stage of its progress sanctions such things as lying, cruelty, polygamy, divorce at the husband's pleasure, and slavery, is not a revelation at all. Temple admits that all these things were practised without a rebuke by the chosen people at a time when 'the reverence for God required' from them 'was as great as the reverence required now.'[1] It will hardly be pretended that men with the intellect and conscience attributed to David and Solomon were incapable of being taught a morality which we now send out missionaries to teach the tribes of Central Africa and Central Australia. There certainly is a moral progress from one part of the Old Testament to the other, and from the Old Testament to the New. But this fact, so far from reconciling revelation with science, proves in the most telling way that they are irreconcilable, just as the conflicting numerical statements of the Pentateuch prove that it is unhistorical. And if any verification were wanting, it would be found in the remarkable fact that those moral truths of fidelity and mercy which supernatural light had not communicated to Israel, Hellas by the unaided light of reason had discovered for itself.[2]

In the last stage of his career James Martineau neither believed nor professed to believe in miracles. He was therefore relieved from the necessity of such preposterous apologetics as Temple's. But his own natural religion lands him in not less insuperable difficulties. All force, let us remember, including matter as one of its forms, is will, and all will that is not human is divine. Whatever life we share with the lower animals comes under the latter category, and our consciousness of it is a consciousness of God. What we derive from intercourse with other men comes from the human or non-divine side of existence. Now when we consider how the subject-matter of morality comes from social needs, and the form of morality from domestic or social training, the essential reciprocity of its laws being based on the interaction of co-ordinated personalities, on the sympathies and synergies of reasonable beings—when, I say, we bear all this in mind, and compare

[1] P. 139.

[2] For proofs of this assertion see an article by the present writer on 'The Ethical Value of Hellenism,' in the 'International Journal of Ethics,' April, 1902.

such activities with our hostile attitude towards the non-human world, can we doubt that, interpreting the material universe as God, our morality must be anti-theistic, and the more so the more highly it is developed? The power not ourselves makes for unrighteousness; what we worship, if there is anything to worship, must be identified, on the method of Green and the Hegelians, with ourselves.

Martineau denies that the feeling of moral obligation can be derived from social pressure. Public opinion can only say, you must, not you ought.[1] And this might be true but for the reciprocity which makes us autonomous, and enables us in our turn to legislate for society. That 'one slight column counterweighs the ocean' is an ethical no less than a hydrostatic paradox. Conscience, like water, returns as much pressure as it receives. At any rate, the theological explanation of conscience as the voice of God has no advantage over the reference to public opinion. For that is a much more obvious confusion of 'ought' with 'must.'

Whether God simply created the world and then left it to run alone, or whether, as Martineau thinks, it is the eternal manifestation of his will, makes no difference to his responsibility for its constitution. Still, when the energy of consuming fire and the energy of living nervous tissue are made to meet, with the result of producing agonising pain, and when this is represented as directly willed by God, one realises his responsibility much more vividly than when it was attached to a far-off creator. Much of 'A Study of Religion' is occupied with arguments in defence of the arrangements by which such consequences are incidentally entailed. But they are arguments which might equally be made to prove that every form of human wickedness is a blessing in disguise. A God who will not break his own laws for the sake of justice and mercy is a cruel pedant not worthy of our worship; a God who cannot break them is a *roi fainéant* not worth it.

There is no originality about the moral argument for theism. Whatever little claim to originality either Temple or Martineau possessed arises from their attempted rehabilitation of Paley in presence of the theory of organic evolution. Final causes were

[1] 'A Study of Religion,' Vol. II., p. 9.

the last entrenchment of theism. But what Coleridge and Newman had pronounced untenable could hardly be held against the new artillery. No considerable writer has ever indulged more recklessly in what George Eliot has called the most gratuitous form of human error, namely prediction, than the late editor of the 'Spectator,' Richard Hutton. But he never erred so hopelessly as in predicting that 'A Study of Religion' would 'found an ethical and religious school not less original, and probably more enduring, because laid upon deeper foundations, than that which Kant founded in Germany by his *Criticism of the Practical Reason.*'[1] No such school has appeared, nor, to judge by certain expressions emanating from Paley's own University, now the seat of England's most advanced thought, is it likely to appear. The most eminent among our younger scientific philosophers, Mr. Bertrand Russell, mentions the argument from design as having 'acquired a popularity' which the other arguments for theism 'have never enjoyed,' just because it is 'more palpably inadequate than any of them.'[2] Mr. Russell is not at any pains to justify this contemptuous dismissal of teleology. But the work of exposing its inherent fallacy has been very effectually done by his colleague, Mr. G. E. Moore, in a lecture on 'The Value of Religion,'[3] which marks the limit of rationalism in one direction, as Dr. McTaggart's 'Studies in Hegelian Cosmology' marks it in another.

Religion, as Mr. Moore understands it, implies the belief in a personal God. Now, personality has two marks. It connotes mind as distinguished from body. And it also connotes the distinction of that mind from other minds, just as our minds are distinguished from each other. 'When God thinks, what he thinks must be one fact, and not the same fact as the thinking of anybody else whatever, even if it can include these other thoughts.'[4] Apparently this proviso is intended to exclude both T. H. Green's 'Eternal Consciousness' and Mr. Bradley's 'Absolute' from the definition. James Martineau would certainly not have objected to it. Further, God must be powerful,

[1] R. H. Hutton, 'Contemporary Thought and Thinkers,' p. 79.
[2] 'The Philosophy of Leibniz,' p. 183.
[3] 'International Journal of Ethics,' Oct., 1901.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

wise, and good, all three in a greater degree than any of us. Now, according to Mr. Moore, 'there is not one atom of evidence establishing the smallest probability that' such a 'God exists, or yet that he does not exist.' Against this position Natural Theology advances the argument from design. It amounts to saying that because some useful and beautiful things in the world are known to have been made by 'some tolerably good people,' therefore 'anything useful or good found in the world that is not a work of man's designing had also for its cause a person of intelligence and goodness.'[1] But this argument assumes as one of its premises that every natural event has been caused by another natural event. Thus if God is a natural event, he must have been caused by another natural event, and so on *ad infinitum*. And 'unless God is a natural cause, he is not a cause of anything at all.'[2]

Both Mr. Moore and Mr. Russell refer to Kant as having exposed the worthlessness of the argument from design. But I think Hume did the work more clearly and thoroughly in his 'Dialogues on Natural Religion'; and although Mr. Moore's statement is neater and more succinct than Hume's, to me at least it is not more convincing. However this may be, it seems odd that a thoroughly discredited method should have held its ground so long, and should even have imposed on such powerful intellects as Mill's and Martineau's. Apparently science had to intervene with its theory of organic evolution in order to secure a reconsideration of the whole question. At the same time, however welcome it may be from a rationalistic point of view, the intervention was not an unmixed advantage to pure reason. For it changed the venue from a court where reason reigned supreme to a court where the decision could be made turn on the merits of more or less contestable theories about the interpretation of particular facts, or on the opinions of more or less prejudiced naturalists. In short, science is a good servant but a bad mistress, or rather her professors are bad masters; and the protest of religion against submission to their authority may be usefully remembered when there is an attempt made to use it as a support for mythology.

For the purpose of historical exposition it has been found

[1] P. 90. [2] P. 91.

most convenient to group together the various phases of Hegelian, or more generally of pantheistic thought in England, associating them more loosely with the attempts made to disarm and capture evolutionary science in the interest of theism or of Biblical religion, and showing how in each instance the attempted combination of faith with reason was attacked and torn up as the spirit of the old century gave way to the spirit of the new, which is no other than the revived spirit of Hume. In fact, the compromises of the middle sixties have their counterpart in the eighties, but with this difference, that their authors speak with less certainty and confidence as the rising flood of rationalism makes their foothold ever more insecure, and the ground yielded more conspicuous than the ground retained. One work in particular, distinguished above all others by its literary brilliancy, shines out as a camp-fire marking the retreat of religious belief before reason, and measuring the distance traversed with more signal accuracy than any other, because its author had already made himself famous by one of those earlier attempts at reconciliation now left so far behind. This was Professor Seeley's 'Natural Religion,' published in 1882.

In fixing the place of 'Ecce Homo' as a hybrid product of English rationalism, I referred by anticipation to its sequel, or rather to the substitute for that promised sequel which was to have dealt with Christ as the creator of modern theology and religion, announced in the preface to its first edition, and still more explicitly characterised in its concluding chapter, by the emphasis laid on Christ's victory over death. 'Natural Religion' scrupulously avoids theology of every kind, the author's idea being, as would seem, that questions about a personal God and a future life lie outside nature, but that the fate of religion as such is not involved in the answer they receive. The contemplation of physical law and order as revealed by modern science, aesthetic enjoyment, interest in public affairs, hopes for the future of humanity—all these, he contends, are religious experiences recalling what was felt by the Jewish worshipper, the pagan Greek, and the Christian devotee; they constitute singly, and still more collectively, a common ground where serious people of all beliefs may meet; and they are quite independent of supernaturalist creeds.

Whether natural religion, in the sense defined by Seeley, really exists, has left traces of itself in the Bible and other sacred literatures, and admits of still higher developments in the future, or whether, on the contrary, the emotions classed under that name have no religious colouring but what they derive from association with supernatural beliefs, is an interesting psychological problem. But its solution does not concern us here. As to the other question, namely what Seeley himself thought about the personality of God and the immortality of man, it might be easily dismissed as of no more than biographical interest. Since, however, a theological writer of some popularity has chosen to circulate unfounded statements on the subject in defiance or in disregard of Seeley's own express declarations to the contrary,[1] it is as well to specify what those declarations are. In mapping out a common ground where supernaturalist believers might join hands with men of science, even those whose science had led them to adopt extreme negative views of the supernatural, the author of 'Natural Religion' did not mean to let it be supposed that such views were his, or that they were implied by the new scientific discoveries. He always felt that his ideas were Christian, and was surprised that any one could question it. He thought that we should believe in a future life, but should think about it as little as possible.[2] Presumably he accepted a personal God, and presumably also he had advanced so far beyond the position of 'Ecce Homo' as to reject miracles.

What raises all this above the level of mere personal gossip is that the confession of faith in the preface to the second edition of 'Natural Religion' places Seeley, for whatever his authority counts, on the side of theology, and therefore makes his second volume a landmark in its retreat. He abandons the whole of what I have called ophelism as a method of faith. Since we can get the moral, the emotional, and the aesthetic advantages of religion without religious belief, then these at least can no longer be pressed on us as inducements to embrace

[1] Mr. W. H. Mallock in 'Atheism and the Value of Life,' pp. 268–9. The date of this volume is 1884. The date of the second edition of Natural Religion' is August, 1882.

[2] If I remember rightly, the statement was made in a letter to the 'Spectator' soon after the publication of 'Natural Religion.'

it in defiance of reason. And even supposing Seeley's judgment to be dismissed as a mere matter of personal opinion, the book will remain of value from another point of view. That Auguste Comte, being himself without belief in God, and at the same time having a taste for devotional exercises, should construct what has been called 'a religion for atheists,' is not, perhaps, very remarkable. But that Seeley, himself a professing Christian, should follow Comte's example requires explanation. And the explanation I believe to be this. The number of serious and moral men and women without theological belief had multiplied to such an extent in England through the seventies, and included individuals of such high intellect and character, that the desirability of meeting them on the common ground of truth, beauty, and goodness pressed itself irresistibly on a politician and moralist with a characteristic passion for unity and comprehension. 'Ecce Homo' made the terms of Christian communion independent of doctrinal differences. But it still imposed a sacramental test on candidates for admission to the Church of Humanity. 'Natural Religion' leaves nothing but the automatic test of feeling.

Another measure for the distance of the retreat is given by the point to which the pursuit was pushed on. Among the representatives of conciliation in the early sixties I counted Herbert Spencer, and among the reasons for including him one was that his agnosticism embraced a certain off-chance if not an element of theism. In the succeeding quarter century his personal opinions about theology probably underwent no modification, but they assumed a more aggressive shape. In an article of his contributed to the 'Nineteenth Century' for January, 1884, the ascription of intelligence and will to an assumed Cause of all things is attacked with trenchant logic and shown to be inconceivable. The argument, be it observed, proceeds solely on psychological data, and would remain equally valid were the possible existence of mind apart from a nervous system to be admitted. Thus the cry of materialism, supposing it to be raised, would on this occasion be more than usually dishonest. Equally little is evolution involved in the question, and the science popularly opposed to theism reduces itself to the sole science of mind.

That the head of the agnostic school should attack religious belief, though a new, was not a surprising incident. But that any positivist should join him was both new and surprising. Positivism is on principle opposed to negation; and the English positivists as a rule held aloof from the theological controversies of the Middle Victorian period, their quarrels, when they had any, being rather with Spencer, Huxley, and Clifford than with the champions of orthodoxy. But being an object of particular detestation to the latter, they, or at least some among them, were occasionally dragged into the fray. In this way Mr. Frederic Harrison, although he wished to let the subject of a future life alone, found himself obliged to maintain the agnostic view single-handed against a host of believers in the 'Nineteenth Century'; while the most comprehensive attack on Christianity that the whole agitation called forth came from the pen of Cotter Morison, a member of the Positivist Society, and on intimate terms with its chiefs. This was 'The Service of Man,' published in 1888, admittedly as a fragment of a larger work which the author's failing health did not permit him to complete.

Of this fragment, which only fills a small volume, not above twenty pages are occupied with a destructive criticism of the Christian theory of the world, and these merely recapitulate the arguments by which, according to Morison, educated men have already been convinced. For the disproof of a personal God, Herbert Spencer's article, already referred to, is quoted. As against the Christian scheme of redemption, the Darwinian theory is applied. The contention that Christianity cannot be accounted for apart from supernatural intervention is met by an appeal to history, and especially to the Tübingen school. Finally, on the moral side, it is denounced as reproducing the iniquitous ideas of a barbarous age. Why, then, do men hesitate to abandon such an outworn creed? Partly in the interest of feeling, as a supposed source of consolation; but also because it is believed to be 'the best support of morality extant.'[1] And the principal object of the book is to show that these are delusive reasons for upholding what we otherwise know to be fictitious. Abundant examples from history and biography are brought up to prove that while the consolations

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

are often found inefficacious against real misery, the terrors of a future judgment have enormously added to what misery there is, both by their direct pressure on the individual imagination, and still more by stimulating fanaticism and persecution. For this purpose one short chapter suffices. Much more space is given to the other part of the argument, to the proof that Christianity neither has had nor can have the beneficent influence on conduct popularly ascribed to it. 'Dr. Pusey, St. Alfonso de' Liguori, and Mr. Spurgeon' agree in teaching that 'a long life devoted to sin can be blotted out in a moment by a change in the sinner's mind.'[1] 'Salvation in the next world depends on other things than good conduct in this.'[2] The results of such a lesson have been what might have been expected. 'Taking them broadly, the Ages of Faith were emphatically ages of crime, of gross and scandalous wickedness, of cruelty, and, in a word, of immorality . . . And in proportion as we recede backwards from the present age and return to the Ages of Faith, we find that the crime and the sin become denser and blacker.'[3] The author's profound historical learning enables him to support this assertion by a number of well-chosen instances, derived particularly from the annals of the seventeenth century and of the Middle Ages, Protestant and Catholic countries both contributing to swell the list.

This collection of historical illustrations forms the most original feature in the 'Service of Man,' and it is interesting in more than one way. Cotter Morison was, as I have said, a member of the Positivist Society, and one of his earlier works had been a glorification of St. Bernard, who is as much a hero of the Comtian as of the Catholic Church. But his last work is, from the high positivist standpoint, distinctly heretical, not only from the great place it gives to mere negation, and from its implied adhesion to the English political economy, but also and even more from this attack on mediaeval morality. For this is an implicit renunciation of the romanticism borrowed by Comte from the French Catholic apologists, and uncritically incorporated into his philosophy of history. Voltaire's view, since confirmed by Buckle, seems to be the right one after all. Priestly supervision has not had that salutary influence on conduct claimed for it by the would-be restorers of Catholicism

[1] Pp. 76–7. [2] P. 87. [3] P. 88.

with or without Christianity, without or with physical science. Thus the departure of this brilliant disciple from positivism becomes not less significant in one way of the ground gained by destructive reason than Seeley's approach to positivism had been symptomatic in another way of the same process.

Theology was finding in Hegel such a support as the dwellers on Zion were warned they would find in Egypt, a reed whereon if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it. What little countenance it had derived from Auguste Comte was being withdrawn. The English working classes would attend neither church nor chapel. The English Non-conformist middle classes on the whole backed up Bradlaugh, and were well pleased to see Mr. John Morley made a Cabinet Minister. And now the sex on whose support Wilberforce, like all other evangelists, had so confidently relied, was also going over to the enemy. That women should depart more or less widely from accepted religious beliefs was indeed no new thing in the history of the century. Among the ablest and best informed the majority perhaps were not Christians; the greatest of all was not a theist. But they had contributed very slightly to the spread of rationalism; and popular fiction, which is the kind of literature most distinctly addressed to women, either favoured orthodox religious belief, or left it unassailed. Such novels as Froude's 'Nemesis of Faith,' Smith's 'Thorndale,' and Samuel Butler's 'Erewhon,' were quite exceptional, and addressed themselves primarily to men. The first to break through the reigning convention with success was Mrs. Lynn Linton. This lady first became famous as the writer of an article in the 'Saturday Review' on the 'Girl of the Period,' inaugurating a series of anti-feminine papers, all of which were, very erroneously, supposed to be her composition. Mrs. Linton had not perhaps the best opinion of her own sex; but she habitually wrote for women, and made a careful study of their tastes. It was therefore not without due consideration of what would influence, or at least interest them, that she brought out in 1879 a three-volume novel called 'Under which Lord?' with an agnostic for its hero, and a High Church clergyman for its most objectionable character. In full accordance with the warnings of the anti-clerical party at that period, the deluded

victims of ritualism are sent over to Rome in a body, while the virtuous agnostic dies in poverty and abandonment, still proclaiming his belief in the Unknowable.

A writer of real genius, far more powerful though less versatile and copious than Mrs. Linton, comes next in order. 'The Story of an African Farm,' by Miss Olive Schreiner (1883), contains the intellectual history of one whose religious doubts begin early and are rapidly ripened into complete negation. Stories of Hebrew barbarities perpetrated with God's full approval, combine with realistic pictures of eternal torment to produce a most repulsive idea of the divine character, not particularly recommended by the occasional gross hypocrisy of the preachers who enlarge on its most ghastly features. That God is discarded, and another, all love, takes his place. But the experience of life proves him no less a dream than the other. 'Now we see what he was made of—the shadow of our highest ideal, crowned and throned. Now we have no God.'[1] Belief in an arbitrary will is succeeded by belief in blind chance. That is the lowest spiritual depth that can be reached —a state not of suffering but of frozen indifference. To the prisoner of that dark void the certainties of arithmetic bring the first message of deliverance. Other sciences follow, and everything, once so difficult, now seems easy to learn. 'We marvel; not perceiving that what a man expends in prayer and ecstasy he cannot have over for acquiring knowledge.'[2] After mathematics come the concrete sciences of nature, learned not from books but by first-hand observation of crystals, fossils, plants, animals. 'The earth ceases to be for us a weltering chaos. Nothing is despicable—all is meaning-full; nothing is small—all is part of a whole, whose beginning and end we know not. The life that throbs in us is a pulsation from it; too mighty for our comprehension, not too small.'[3] But before truth can be sought after with any hope of success, all supernaturalist illusions must be abandoned. The last to go is the most cherished, figured by Olive Schreiner, in a magnificent allegory, as the dark-plumed bird of Immortality.[4] 'For the little soul that cries aloud for continued personal existence for itself and its beloved, there is no help. For the soul which

[1] 'The Story of an African Farm,' p. 127 (ed. of 1887).
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 130. [3] P. 132. [4] P. 142.

knows itself no more as a unit, but as a part of the Universal Unity of which the Beloved also is a part; which feels within itself the throb of the Universal Life; for that soul there is no death.'[1]

So rang out the answer, clear and strong, of a woman's voice to Seeley's claim that the belief in a future life should be surreptitiously preserved, to the claim of his orthodox critics that it should be made the shibboleth of religion. How it affected the many thousands of women who read her novel we do not yet know. Among the many men who also read it and shared the author's convictions without the splendid idealism that lifted them into a gospel of deliverance from self-seeking, some may have deplored the possible effect of such plain-speaking, so different from George Eliot's reticence, on the faith of their womenkind. All such must have been surprised and even perhaps shocked at finding the office of converting their wives and children to naturalism impressed on them as a solemn duty by another lady of high literary distinction, the writer best known under the pseudonym of Vernon Lee. Her argument is thrown into the form of a dialogue between three rationalists, of whom one, Baldwin, represents the author's views, and one of the others, Vere, the conventional standpoint of the free-thinking husband and father who leaves the education of his children to their mother, and leaves her to the faith in which she has been brought up. By what reasonings Baldwin undermines and circumvents his friend's position need not here be detailed, our business being with the history rather than with the ethics of rationalism. It is enough to say that they are pressed home with Vernon Lee's wonted ability; and that her dialogue provoked the author of John Inglesant into composing a singularly pointless reply under the form of a novel called 'Sir Percival,' where an unbelieving girl parades without provocation her hostility to religion at her uncle's dinner-table before an orthodox company. What had been claimed for rationalists was the duty of propagating their convictions to the same extent as religious believers; not the right of intruding them unseasonably on a reluctant audience in a way which, were it adopted by a Roman Catholic or a Unitarian, would be thought equally injudicious and ill-bred.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 285.

The most popular of all contributions made by a woman to rationalistic literature is also the last—Mrs. Humphry Ward's 'Robert Elsmere' (1888). Being also the most moderate, it was, if only for that reason, the best calculated to win success. The hero, a young clergyman of the Church of England, is led by his studies in the lives of the Spanish saints to examine the sort of evidence on which belief in miracles rests, with the result of abandoning it altogether. He then gives up his living, goes to London and preaches a rather indefinite sort of theism, whose chief recommendation seems to be that it cannot be disproved. After some years of this apostolate he dies young, consoled by some equally vague hope of a not impossible future life.

Whatever romantic interest 'Robert Elsmere' possesses comes from the relations between the young clergyman and his wife. Indirectly they afford a striking confirmation of Vernon Lee's thesis. At least there seems to have been a general agreement among the critics that Robert should have taken Catherine into his confidence before resigning his position in the Church; and this must have led to a complete interchange of views between the couple on the subject of miracles, probably resulting in her acceptance of his rationalism—as far as it went,—to the great gain of their common happiness during what remained of his life. Another noteworthy circumstance was a general feeling, rather implied than expressed, that belief in the miraculous narratives of the New Testament, however necessary to a candidate for ordination, may subsequently drop away from the mind of the parish priest without necessitating the relinquishment of his benefice. Among the more highly educated and studious clergy probably not a few had become to that extent rationalists, but were not prepared to follow Elsmere's example, and may even have held that to do so would have been disloyalty to the highest truth.

Such was and is the point of view represented by one of the most distinguished among contemporary Biblical scholars, Dr. Edwin Abbott, at that time Headmaster of the City of London School. Converted to the theology of Maurice when a boy, and to the doctrine of evolution in early manhood, he had devoted himself to Gospel criticism soon after ordination, and after fifteen years' study had convinced himself that the Gospel

miracles were mere legendary accretions to the true story of Christ.[1] In a work called 'Philochristus' (1878) he endeavoured to exhibit the Saviour's life as it may actually have passed, and cleared from legendary overgrowths, following it up by a similar imaginative view of St. Paul's career, entitled 'Onesimus,' in 1882. A third work, 'The Kernel and the Husk' (1886), attacks the same subject analytically, discussing the miraculous as a question of fact and evidence, in reference to the narratives both of the Old and the New Testament, and explaining how the stories of supernatural events may have been evolved without any breach of natural law. Of Christ's miracles only those related by the Synoptics are considered, the Fourth Gospel being set aside as unhistorical. The stories of his birth and bodily resurrection are of course rejected, but the doctrine of his Godhead remains along with the Atonement and a future life of retribution, understood in a somewhat esoteric sense. Finally Dr. Abbott, as I have said, maintains the right of those who agree with him to continue in the ministry of the Church of England. As for entering it, semi-rationalists are advised to 'set their case before the Bishops, leaving it to them to accept or refuse them as candidates for ordination.'[2] It would be interesting to know whether the experiment has been tried, and if so, with what results.

The enormous success of Robert Elsmere marks one more crisis in the history of English Rationalism, or indicates at least that a crisis had already for some time set in. It showed that interest was once more being excited by questions of Biblical criticism, the only questions through which rationalism can appeal to the general public, even of comparatively educated readers in England. That appeal had been made with success by Francis Newman in 1850, by the Essayists in 1860, by Matthew Arnold and Mr. Walter Cassels in the early seventies. It was now being made again from various quarters in the later eighties. Apart from Biblical religion, questions about the ultimate realities of spirit, although apart from them the others would be meaningless, attract little attention outside the highest circles of culture, where it is true they leave no room for any

[1] 'The Kernel and the Husk,' pp. 7 *sqq.*

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 349.

other. And that is why the stormy periods of criticism coincide so nearly with the political periods of reaction or of dead calm. There is not sufficient energy available outside those circles to drive the wheels of progress in speculation and in practice at the same time.

There can be no doubt that the electoral triumph of 1880 was followed by a distinct ebb in the political Liberalism of England, which, but for the County Franchise Act, would have led to a Conservative victory in 1885. As it was, the general election of that year left the Liberals, apart from Parnellite support, without a majority in the House of Commons, and nearly a third of this diminished number abandoned their party on the question of Home Rule; while the ensuing appeal to the country so augmented the Conservative ranks as to make their chiefs practically masters of the situation. Then it soon became evident how little reaction against democratic license and incompetence was associated with reaction against the use of reason in religion. Indeed, the 'Service of Man' and 'Robert Elsmere' were written by upholders of law and order in society no less than in nature; while the fallen Liberal leader came forward to support not only the political ideals, but also the Biblical mythology of the masses.

To interest a popular audience, the issue between faith and reason, as I have said, had to be changed from the question of theism to the question of Biblical authority. It is characteristic of English ideas on the subject that the meaning of agnosticism should, in this connexion, have come to be so totally misunderstood. Primarily connoting the rejection of certain metaphysical reasonings about the ultimate reality of things, it incidentally connotes the rejection of revealed religion. At the same time it is quite possible to reject revelation without being an agnostic; and probably the number of persons who limit themselves to that form of negation while retaining their theistic belief, exceeds the number of real agnostics. Nevertheless, metaphysics have become identified with religion, and religion with the Bible to such an extent that not to believe the Bible is popularly confounded with believing nothing, and this sceptical attitude is supposed to be what agnosticism means. At a Church Congress held in 1889, an ill-informed or dishonest theological controversialist took advantage of this confusion to propose that

the name infidel should be substituted for agnostic to designate one who declares that 'he has no means of a scientific knowledge of the unseen world, or of the future.' For this amounts to saying that 'he does not believe in Jesus Christ.'[1]

In terms the statement is true, although it is put in a way which does no credit to the intellect or character of the speaker. Agnostics most certainly believe that Jesus was a simple man, knowing no more than other men about the real nature of the world in which he lived. If he was the incarnation of an omniscient God, or even if, being less than that, he was in the confidence of an omniscient God and commissioned to reveal his nature, they are of course mistaken. But to convince them of their mistake it would be first necessary to prove the existence of a personal God. And for that reason an appeal to the authority of Jesus is provisionally irrelevant.

Professor Huxley, who had invented the name agnostic, took up the challenge in the 'Nineteenth Century,' a review which at this time had superseded the 'Fortnightly' as an organ of free discussion on religious belief. He did not take the ground above indicated as the most logical position for an agnostic; and this abstinence, supposing it to have been deliberate, was well-advised from his point of view; for while quite capable of carrying on a purely metaphysical discussion, even he could hardly have made it acceptable to the general reader. Probably, however, the course he adopted was less deliberate than instinctive, and may be best described as inspired by sympathy with the spirit of the age. Biblical criticism was in the air, and he seized the opportunity for capturing it in the interest of science.

Very early in life Huxley had been particularly impressed by that aspect of the High Church movement which represented religious belief as a duty and religious unbelief as a sin. It seemed to him, on the contrary, that all belief, whether religious or scientific, came under the same ethical and logical laws, that to believe on imperfect evidence was equally vicious in all departments of enquiry, that the highest scientific standards of proof should be accepted as universally obligatory. And now when the theologians of the Church Congress proposed to substitute the old word infidel for his own neutral-tinted word

[1] Huxley, 'Science and Christian Tradition,' p. 210.

agnostic, he put a new meaning on it, which was in fact a repudiation of the ecclesiastical demand for faith without proof. 'Agnosticism,' he declared, 'is not a creed but a method.' It is the principle of Socrates, of the Reformation, of Descartes, and of modern science. What this principle tells us is: 'In matters of the intellect follow your reason as far as it will take you, without regard for any other consideration;' and 'do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable.'[1]

A definition so elastic that it might easily be made to include Plato, Spinoza, Paley, and F. D. Maurice among the agnostics, while at the same time possibly excluding Herbert Spencer, is valueless on the face of it; and this definition has the additional drawback of not necessarily covering what Huxley himself had put forward as the chief note of agnosticism when he first professed it, which is that the reality behind appearances, if any, neither is nor can be known. A good and useful name was spoiled that its author might retaliate on those who taunted him with infidelity by taunting them with what was either credulous folly or systematic hypocrisy. Happily the attempt did not succeed, and agnosticism continues to be understood in a sense excluding Hegelian philosophy on the one side and Christian belief on the other.

I need hardly say that Huxley was not a Christian believer. The fact, however, has to be mentioned, because he kept it carefully out of sight in his first passage of arms with the Church Congress speakers, and because it gives profound seriousness to various other controversies of a seemingly petty if not undignified character, in which he became engaged both before and after that memorable encounter. To understand fully what those controversies implied we must again go back to an earlier period of Huxley's life, when science was struggling to hold its own against Scripture, first on the field of geology and then on the wider field of organic evolution. A certain training in philosophy had taught the young naturalist to regard the High Church demand for unreasoning faith as essentially immoral. And when he found that in practice this faith amounted to a denial of scientific truth, his dislike for it developed into intense hostility. It was not diminished by a certain intellectual

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 245–6.

sympathy with the other side. The clergy, in his opinion, had a perfect right to look on Lyell and Darwin as their most dangerous enemies. What science taught about the history of the earth and man could not be reconciled with the story, or rather the stories—for there are two of them—of the creation in Genesis. And the Hebrew account of man's origin had been so incorporated with Christian dogma that to deny it involved the ruin of Christianity; besides which, as some of the Christian apologists themselves maintained, the truth of various narratives in the Old Testament was guaranteed by references in the Gospel, put into the mouth of Christ himself. Nor could the credit of the New Testament be maintained even if all such references were explained away. The authority either of Jesus himself, or at least of the informants on whom alone we can rely for an accurate report of his teaching, stands pledged to the reality of demoniacal possession. Now, the belief in evil spirits, who have the power of entering into human or animal bodies, is a grotesque superstition only entertained by ignorant races, and dispelled by the advance of medical science, which shows that the alleged cases of possession are simply cases of hysteria, epilepsy, or insanity. In other words, they have been taken out of the supernaturalist sphere and reduced to laws of natural causation. This is a case where the claims of science directly collide with the claims of religious belief, and where the victory of science, if it be admitted, means the defeat of Christianity as a historical religion. The witness of Jesus to the Fatherhood of God as a personal Spirit amounts to no more than his witness to personal devils as authors of disease; and the witness of the Evangelists to their Master's authorship of the Sermon on the Mount is less unanimous than their witness to the destruction by diabolical agency of the Gadarene swine.

Fortune furnished Huxley with two opportunities for doing his worst on anti-scientific belief, first with regard to the cosmology of Genesis, and then with regard to the demonology of the Gospels. An eminent French Protestant theologian, M. Albert Réville, wrote a book on the history of religion, in which the traditions recorded in Genesis are mentioned as very interesting documents, but as having no greater claim on our belief than others of similar antiquity found elsewhere. Unfortunately for his reputation, the versatile chief of the Liberal

party in England took offence at the slight thus thrown on Biblical infallibility, and wrote an article affirming that the so-called Mosaic cosmogony had been confirmed in its main outlines by modern science. An assertion so rash and belated at once called up Huxley, who came to the rescue of M. Réville in a paper showing the total discrepancy between the sacerdotal and the scientific versions of what had happened in pre-historic time. A reply from Gladstone, full of the great orator's usual shifts and evasions, only served to elicit a still more destructive criticism from the veteran Professor.

Three years later, in the course of the agnostic controversy, Huxley referred to the story of the Gadarene swine as a piece of evidence going to discredit either the authority of Jesus as a witness to the unseen, or the authority of the Synoptics as witnesses to his teaching on that subject; observing, as an aggravating circumstance, that the fate of the swine, had it been such as is related, would have involved 'the wanton destruction of other people's property,' and that this would have been 'a misdemeanour of evil example.'[1] As he neither did nor could believe in the reality of the miracle, no reflexion on the character of the historical Jesus was implied, whatever might be the writer's opinion about the morality of those who accepted the story as true, and as a revelation of divine goodness. But by a singular obliquity of mental vision, the cleverest man in England missed what every one else could see. Gladstone treated the charge 'as an accusation against our Lord,' and rushed into the fray for the purpose of rebutting it. The pigs, according to him, belonged to a Jew or Jews, who broke the Mosaic law by keeping them, and therefore were justly deprived of animals they had no right to possess. What Huxley had said of Bishop Wilberforce thirty years before he might have repeated with even more truth on the present occasion. The Lord had delivered his enemy into his hands. Not merely in good temper, not merely in powers of sarcasm, not merely in literary skill, but also in erudition and logic he proved himself Gladstone's master, and inflicted such punishment on the old Parliamentary hand as in the course of a long and varied experience had never befallen him from either side of the House of Commons.

[1] 'Science and Christian Tradition,' p. 369.

Into the details of that famous controversy I need go no further. Nowhere but in England would it have been possible; but in reference to English opinion it possesses high importance. It is our way to connect great questions of principle with concrete issues, which though small are crucial, with precise and definite matters of fact. It may be practical, as with Hampden's shipmoney, or Mansfield's Somersett judgment, or the Clitheroe case in our own memory, or speculative as with Joule's measurement of the degrees of heat spent in raising a pound's weight a foot from the ground, or Darwin's experiments on pigeons. But it would argue great ignorance of law and science to cry out against having the cause of liberty or of evolution associated with such petty tests. And we may say the same of Huxley and his pigs. He made them a test-case of the belief in miracles, of Synoptic authority, and of the scientific enquirer's right to sit in judgment on both. The larger question whether Christianity can survive the belief in miracles, and if so, under what form, still remained unsettled. More generally still, the relations between religious belief and history were coming more and more to the front, with consequences at first limited to the world of scholarship, but not improbably destined to spread themselves in wider circles among all who are capable of forming an opinion for themselves. It is with these relations that our next and final chapter will be chiefly concerned.

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CHAPTER XX

THE HISTORICAL METHOD

EUROPEAN Rationalism from its first origin among the Ionians has been accompanied by attempts, at first feeble and intermittent, but afterwards increasing in vigour and continuity, to explain the religious beliefs which reason had overthrown, and by explaining to render their overthrow still more complete. Thus Xenophanes suggested that men had made gods in their own image, pointing in proof to the physical resemblance between the barbarians of Thrace and Africa and the objects of their worship. During the period of intense intellectual activity which marked the second half of the fifth century B.C. at Athens we may even detect two divergent schools of comparative mythology, one, represented by Critias, explaining religion as having been created by statesmen in the interests of public order, the other, represented by Prodicus, explaining it as having arisen spontaneously from the personification of natural objects; Prodicus in particular showing his profound insight by associating the whole cycle of public worship with the periodically recurring processes of agriculture.[1] Epicurus accounted for the belief in gods by supposing that films were being continually thrown off from their bodies, which wandered through space and occasionally impinged on the human eye. At a somewhat later period Euhemerus constructed the more celebrated theory according to which the gods and goddesses were real men and women, of whose adventures on earth mythology preserves an exaggerated record. The Stoics and Platonists, on the other hand, interpreted the popular myths as allegories, containing a deep physical or spiritual significance.

Christian philosophy has always been rationalistic as regards other religious beliefs, endeavouring by the application of

[1] Zeller, 'Philosophie der Griechen,' Vol. I., pp. 1133–4.

reason to destroy them. And it has also felt called on to give a reason for their existence. This was done in a simple and summary fashion by representing the pagan deities as so many devils, and the stories about them as either true or made up under daemonic inspiration. Satan has also been made responsible for the great rival religion of Islam; but the undeniable personality of Mohammed has led to the recognition of downright human imposture, whether due to Satan's suggestions or not, as an important element in its composition. Mediaeval rationalists, with the great Emperor Frederick II. at their head, pushed this convenient method a little further, reckoning the founders of Mosaism and Christianity under the same category as the Arabian prophet.

The first systematic deist of modern times, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, ascribed whatever was false, or in other words whatever pretended to be supernatural, in all religions to the same causes, that is to the knavery of priests who profit by the multiplication of deities with rites and ceremonies in the same proportion, and the credulity of the vulgar, who readily believe what they are told about the unseen. Toland took a great step in advance by pointing to the belief in human immortality as the root of all religion, and to the celebration of funeral rites as the origin of that belief.[1] By a still more remarkable anticipation of certain modern theories, he supposes that to preserve the memory of great men their names were given to the stars, and that star-worship arose from this association.[2] Hume's Natural History of Religion has the double merit of placing polytheism before monotheism in the order of development, and of connecting religious belief in general with the ascription of human characteristics to nature. Next comes the celebrated work of De Brosses, to whom we owe the word fetichism. It is an attempt to connect the religion of ancient Egypt with the worship of stones and the like by the Negroes of West Africa. Evidently the eighteenth century, so often accused of neglecting the historical method, was making approaches to it from various sides, and with considerable success. Finally we have Gibbon's famous fifteenth chapter, with its very painstaking analysis of the causes to which Christianity owed its success. It has no great value, except as an improvement in method, that is by

[1] 'Letters to Serena,' ii.

[2] *Op cit.*, p. 45.

substituting a more scientific explanation for the theory of imposture.

For a long time the nineteenth century made no real addition to Hume or Gibbon. Hegel 'constructed' religion in general and Christianity in particular, as he constructed every other form of existence, by a process satisfactory to none but those who accepted his philosophy as a whole. Comte rather assumes than explains the evolution of religion. England was long debarred by the pietistic movement from contributing anything to the subject. Charles Hennell called his book 'An Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity'—an apparent admission that it had to be accounted for by some process of development. But beyond some references to the Essenes he cannot be said to have even attempted a historical solution. Milman's more ambitious work interpreted the Catholic system as a sort of eclectic scheme, selecting and combining what was best in the religions and philosophies of the age. Newman calmly replied that the selection could only have been made by a divinely guided authority, the Church. But this criticism did not touch Milman's weakest point, his omission of what was most characteristic in Christianity, the sacrificial and sacramental element. Little light is thrown on this side by a comparison with the more highly evolved religions, and none by a comparison with Greek philosophy. The key must be sought in primitive ideas and in their survivals among the lower strata of civilised societies.

During the later years of the nineteenth century Britain's most distinctive and original contributions to our knowledge have related to the early history of mankind, beginning with the most ancient civilisations of Egypt and Babylon, and extending back from these to the most primitive forms of human society. It might be thought that Darwin's 'Origin of Species' gave the first impulse and direction to this extraordinary curiosity about far-off and rudimentary things. But that great work was itself an effect rather than a cause of the general movement. The explorations of Nineveh are anterior by several years to its publication, and Maine's 'Ancient Law,' though it appeared a little later, was evidently thought out in complete independence of its speculations. The same may be

said of Lyell's 'Antiquity of Man,' notwithstanding the author's partial adhesion to Darwin; and indeed so little connexion have the two that Lyell's conclusions were accepted by Sedgwick, who detested the theory of organic evolution. If man was developed from an ape-like animal, he must necessarily have passed through the savage state, but the converse proposition is not true. That he was first a savage does not necessitate the conclusion that he was first a brute; although to such romanticists as Max Müller the one proposition may have been as unwelcome as the other.

We have, however, if such a thing be needed, the direct evidence of the anthropologists themselves to their independence of Darwin. In the preface to the second edition of 'Primitive Culture,' Professor Tylor observes that some readers may have been struck by the almost complete absence of reference to Darwin and Spencer, and accounts for it by the fact that his work, while 'insisting strenuously on a theory of evolution, scarcely comes into contact of detail with the previous works of these eminent philosophers.'[1] And, similarly, McLennan, in the preface to the second edition of his 'Primitive Marriage,' draws attention to the omission of Darwin's 'Descent of Man' from the works he has noticed.[2] That he should have noticed the 'Origin of Species' was evidently not to be expected.

The two writers quoted have passed over in still deeper silence another book of origins, formerly of some authority in the field of their enquiries, namely Genesis. Certainly they offer a view of primitive man which, whether Darwinian or not, leaves no place for the view or views entertained by the contributors to that composite record. So marked a contrast did, I believe, attract some notice in McLennan's case, and drew down on him the charge—probably not undeserved—of infidelity. But such very doubtful theories as those of 'Primitive Marriage' could do Genesis no harm. It was already beyond the reach of harm. The collapse of traditional authority under the rationalistic attack had made such theories possible because the theological theory no longer existed.

Much more important traditions than those of Genesis were now on their trial, and were being threatened by the best

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. vii.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. ix.

established results of anthropology. Dr. Newman had identified natural religion with the religion of primitive man, and had seemed to stake more elaborate theologies on the reasonableness of that. The new science had a good deal to tell about it, including facts of a very interesting character, not so much new facts as facts placed in a new connexion, and so generalised as to bear very startling interpretations.

The most fundamental of primitive ideas, so far as they are known to the modern enquirer, is Animism. Animism means something more than the belief that human beings have a soul distinct from their material organism, and it means something less than a belief in the universal animation of material objects. It implies, first of all, the notion of a soul in man, distinct and separable from his body as much as the man himself is from his house. Among the more highly civilised races the popular belief is that the soul somehow becomes attached to the body at a very early stage of its embryonic development, remains closely united to it through life, and leaves it for ever at the moment of death. But among savages, and to a certain extent among semi-civilised peoples, it is believed that the soul can occasionally absent itself from the body during life, returning safely after more or less protracted visits to foreign parts, and sometimes bringing back authentic intelligence of what it has seen and heard abroad. Even death is by no means an insuperable barrier to the reunion of soul and body. Just as with a house or other habitation, nothing less than complete decay or destruction, as, for instance, by fire, of the earthly tenement can prevent the restoration to it of its guest.

It is supposed that savages have been led to form this conception by various indications, to them of a sufficiently convincing character. Shadows and reflexions in water suggest the existence of a double, a second self, closely attached to, yet distinct from, the first. Dreams are interpreted as its experiences when away from the body; and finally death comes to complete the notion of a distinct entity to which the manifestations of life and consciousness are due. And it is inferred that primitive men, whether resembling savages in all respects or not, being at any rate not less ignorant, were led by the same experiences to the same conclusion.

A house has room for more than one tenant, and is always liable to the visits of hostile or disagreeable intruders. At a low stage of culture bodily, and still more what we call mental diseases are ascribed to the invasion of strange spirits, who make the body of the afflicted person their temporary or permanent abode, sometimes even ousting its legitimate occupant; and they are to be got rid of, if at all, by personal appeals, or by remedies connected with the trains of imaginative association, rather than by such means as scientific observation and experiment would suggest or sanction. Cases of insanity are easily explicable on such a hypothesis ; and even apart from insanity, such expressions as 'beside oneself,' 'out of one's mind,' 'not oneself at all,' as applied to slight disturbances of the mental equilibrium, show with what facility it can be adopted.

In a world where souls and bodies are freely interchangeable, spiritual causes of disease and insanity need never be far to seek; and besides visits from the living, what we still call 'departed souls' offer a practically inexhaustible reserve of agents for producing these and other abnormal experiences. As is well known, dead members of the family present themselves in the dreams of the survivors with more frequency and vividness than any other memories, thus placing their continued existence and activity beyond a doubt among those with whom dreams and realities are habitually confused.

Animism as the doctrine of separable and migratory souls, continually reincarnating themselves in different bodies without loss of personal identity, was first fully explained by Professor E. B. Tylor, to whom also we owe the word in its wider application, in his great work on 'Primitive Culture,' and a little later, but apparently on independent lines, by Herbert Spencer, in Vol. I. of his 'Principles of Sociology.' In so far as both these enquirers were giving a systematised account of what savages, and presumably all primitive men, thought about the human soul, they were fairly agreed. But there was considerable divergence in their respective interpretations of primitive religion and mythology. Professor Tylor finds no difficulty in the traditional theory that untaught minds habitually conceive the events of inorganic nature as due to the presence of a spiritual principle like that by which human

beings and living creatures in general are animated. Spencer, on the contrary, held that such a generalisation was not such as would be spontaneously formed; that the lowest savage could not fail to grasp that elementary distinction between living and dead bodies which is perfectly obvious to the higher animals; and that civilised children, whose ideas on the subject are often appealed to, never for a moment imagine that dolls and furniture feel pain when they are struck. According to him, all religion is ancestor-worship; and it is only through accidental association with deified men and women that plants, animals, rivers, mountains, and heavenly bodies have come to receive divine honours. Even when their human origin has been forgotten, ritual and mythology preserve a reminiscence of it, and only in reference to such an origin can these be rightly understood. The altar is a tombstone, the sacrifice is a funeral feast provided for the departed spirit, the prayers and praises such as might be addressed to a powerful chief in his lifetime. What Max Müller and his school call solar myths cannot without straining be read as descriptions of celestial phenomena; they become intelligible as more or less authentic stories about the real heroes and heroines of history.

Herbert Spencer was well aware that his theory of religious origins cut out Christianity by the very roots; that is to say, it reduced Hebrew theology, like all other theologies, to the worship of a deified ancestor named Iahveh. After that, detailed criticism of the Gospel-history or of the ecclesiastical deductions from it would be needless; for they assume an eternal Father, whereas on his interpretation to be equal to the Father is to be equal to nothing. What apparently escaped the philosopher's attention was that in destroying the authority of every historical religion, including Christianity, the authority of as much religion as his system incorporates was destroyed to an equal extent. Religion interpreted as nature-worship could be quoted as a witness to the universal belief of mankind in a Power behind phenomena recognised also by science. Religion interpreted as ghost-worship would be a witness to nothing better than the enormous capacity of the human mind for self-delusion. By denying the fact of human survival Spencer fatally discredits all ghosts, including that residual Unknowable which, on his own showing, is but

the shadow of a shade. True, there remains, for whatever it may be worth or whatever it may mean, the 'Energy unceasingly manifested everywhere, throughout past, present, and future.'[1] But since atheists may recognise this energy, to recognise it is not religion.

So far, however, as Spencer's theory goes, religious believers, who also accept the historical method, may set their minds at rest. It has not, to my knowledge, received the adhesion of any independent thinker except the lamented Mr. Grant Allen. Meanwhile the general theory of animism remains unaffected, and may possibly lead by a more circuitous method to the same conclusion. That there is a primitive or instinctive tendency to think of all nature as animated may or may not be true. Animism, as I understand it, implies something more and something different. It means, as I have said, that the source of life and consciousness in man is a spirit distinct and separable from his body; and the spirits conceived as animating non-human bodies would presumably be modelled on this original type. That is to say, they also would be thought of as migrating from one body to another, or even as dispensing with a bodily habitation altogether. Physical phenomena, when once recognised and identified as preserving a certain continuity through a series of changes, would readily lend themselves to such an animistic interpretation, which indeed has its analogies with the language of positive science, as when Aristotle calls motion an immortal life of composite things,[2] not permanently attached to any of them, but passing from one to the other; or as when his modern successors talk about the transformations of energy. A body may pass from hot to cold, from light to dark, from soft to hard, from sweet to sour, without losing its underlying unity of substance, thus suggesting the temporary presence of so many strange spirits; or it may vanish and reappear, as the heavenly bodies do, suggesting the departure and return of its own spirit. Now comparative mythology shows that the people whom, relatively to ourselves, we call primitive did actually conceive nature under such forms, as a vast theatre for the restless activity and ever-varying embodiment of migratory spiritual beings. The result was a sort of intellectual fall

[1] 'Principles of Sociology,' Vol. III., p. 36.

[2] 'Physics,' Bk. VIII., *sub in.*

of man, a confusion of which his reason alone made him capable and from which reason alone can redeem him. Animism effaced the distinction, clear to any dog, between the human and the non-human, the conscious and the unconscious, the living and the lifeless. And at the same time it gave a separate existence to attributes or groups of attributes which language enables us to abstract from the concrete realities to which they belong, and apart from which they are no more than ideal constructions.

For the purposes of rationalism it matters little or nothing whether we call animism the most elementary form of religion, or not a religion, but a philosophy. For such a philosophy is at any rate presupposed by the reigning religion, assuming as this does the existence of consciousness under the name of spirit, and of body under the name of matter, as distinct and separate substances; while at the same time assuming that individual spirits can unite themselves with and animate masses of matter. In this reference the importance of animism, whether we choose to call it a religion or a philosophy, or rather of Professor Tylor's theory about animism, lies in the consistent and comprehensive way in which it applies the notion of spirits to the whole range of human experience, thus explaining the origin of every primitive superstition, and among others of those superstitions which have survived down to modern times, and are still active among us. If it can be shown that any religious beliefs, still widely entertained, belong to a large family of beliefs, now generally acknowledged to be illusory, their authority must be, to that extent, seriously shaken, and their vast antiquity must be counted, not as enhancing, but as discrediting their validity for ourselves.

That some such applications of the animistic theory can be made has not escaped its illustrious author; and there was a time when he did not shrink from its recognition. Writing in 1877, a year which, as it will be remembered, marks the very climax of the anti-clerical movement, Professor Tylor observes that, 'the general belief in souls and deities is not ultimately derived from occult tendencies in man or revelations to man, but is based on the philosophy of remote rude ages, whose doctrine has been only more or less modified in modern theologies. It need hardly be said that such a view of the origin of fundamental theological ideas is revolutionary. If it, or

anything like it, can be proved to the satisfaction of the educated world to be the true view, then the generally received systems of theology must either be developed into systems more in harmony with modern knowledge, or they must after a time be superseded and fall into decay.' And while rejecting Herbert Spencer's extreme generalisation of the ghost-theory, he goes on to welcome Spencer's assistance in treating 'the development of religious ideas on the animistic line.' [1]

Animism as a whole comes into relation with what used to be called the truths of natural religion, and when philosophically treated, it acts as a historical criticism on their claims. But there is a particular department of animism, studied with unremitting attention for many years past, that has yielded still more important results by throwing an unexpected light on the origin of Catholic Christianity. I refer to the worship of plants and animals, now familiar to all ethnologists under the name of totemism. Totem is a word of Algonquin derivation, primarily serving to denote the plant or animal worshipped by various North American tribes, and looked on as the common ancestor of the clan. Next to the North American Indians, the native Australians are the greatest totemists; but enquiry has shown that the custom was once far more widely spread, and it is now believed that every race of mankind has passed through a totemistic stage in the upward progress of civilisation. McLennan was the first to study the worship of plants and animals on scientific principles; but it interested him chiefly in connexion with primitive marriage, the laws regulating which were dependent on the use of totems as signs of family relationships. It was left for another Scotchman, Professor Robertson Smith, to bring out the paramount religious importance of the institution. This illustrious scholar had already made himself conspicuous as a liberal theologian by articles in the 'Encyclopaedia Britannica,' and by courses of public lectures popularising the higher criticism of the Old Testament, with the result that he was driven from his chair in the Free Church College of Aberdeen—church-freedom in Scotland having no relation to liberty of thought. Cambridge, the great modern focus of free thought, gave him in compensation her professorship

[1] 'Mind,' Vol. II., p. 142.

of Arabic. Yet, after all, the Scottish interest in theology, even with the occasional drawback of persecution, is more stimulating to new enquiry than the English toleration, which is sometimes but another name for indifference. Robertson Smith's most daring speculations were first brought out under the form of Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, delivered, not at Cambridge, but at his old home, Aberdeen, in 1888, and published as a book the year after.

In the third of these Lectures it is explained what totemism means, and evidence is adduced to show that the Semites, like other races, practised it in early times. They worshipped some natural object, generally an animal, treating it as a brother, a human clansman, and believing it to perform important services to the clan. In the eighth and ninth Lectures it is explained how sacrifices originated from this peculiar relation between the totem-god and its worshippers. Members of a primitive community are bound to one another by the tie of blood, by their descent from a common ancestor, real or imaginary. Further, the natural bond may be extended artificially by establishing a blood-brotherhood with the candidate for admission to the tribe. For the purpose it is enough that he and one of its members should taste each other's blood. This constitutes a covenant for life; but a sort of honorary membership for a limited period may be obtained by participation in a common meal; until the effects of the meal are exhausted it is considered that the guest is of one blood with his host. By virtue of the blood-bond, whether natural or artificial, the lives of all members of the community, including the totem-animal, are sacred to one another, and, in ordinary circumstances, to kill the totem is murder. Nevertheless, to keep up the covenant, its blood must occasionally be mingled with the blood of the tribe. It is supposed that sacrifices were instituted in order to reconcile these conflicting requirements. A single totem-animal, representing the whole species, is killed and eaten by the whole tribe, who thus sacramentally incorporate the ideal substance of what they worship with themselves, mystically identifying man with his god. Nations like the Israelites, who have risen above totemism, even to the extent of proscribing it as sinful, still preserve the institution of sacrifice under the form of a meal, to which their god is invited; and in such a comparatively

early state of society as that represented by the Books of Samuel, no domestic animal is killed and eaten except as a sacrifice. Even at that late period when sacrifices are offered up as an expiation of guilt, the original idea of the ceremony still survives. For nothing better calculated to conciliate an estranged deity can be imagined than an act symbolising the original blood-covenant between him and his worshippers.

In quoting Cardinal Newman's theory of sacrifice as a witness to primitive man's original and indestructible consciousness of guilt estranging him from God, I referred in disproof of it to the true explanation, which has now been stated at greater length. Robertson Smith may or may not have had Newman in mind; but at any rate he is careful to point out that animal sacrifices in their earlier stage were of a particularly festive and cheerful character, as indeed there was no reason why they should be anything else, when once the slaughter of the totem had ceased to be regarded as a melancholy duty. A different view set in afterwards, and the offering became truly piacular; but this was because the political catastrophes of the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. had produced a conviction that the tribal God was offended with his people and required to be propitiated by bloodshed;—not in the least because it was believed that the whole human race had incurred his displeasure almost at its first origin.

No religious body is responsible for Newman's sinister interpretation of sacrifice; and its destruction merely discredits his reputation as a grammarian of assent. But if we accept Robertson Smith's interpretation, an issue far more menacing to ecclesiastical Christianity is raised. Briefly, it assimilates the Sacrament of the Eucharist to the very lowest savage superstition, marking the first traceable advent of make-believe and hypocrisy in religion. It confirms as nothing else could confirm the Catholic view of that institution, but at the expense of replacing it in a whole cycle of beliefs such as no educated and rational human being could entertain. Jewish religion as organised by the great prophets had risen far above such superstition, and has persistently protested against it as a heathen corruption of the pure ethical monotheism that Amos taught. So also did the Calvinists and Evangelicals protest, in defiance of St. Paul's obvious meaning. But when Robertson Smith

wrote, the High Church party, who were rapidly becoming the only Church party in England, had made this neo-totemism the very centre of public worship, forcing it on the laity with a frequency far in excess of any Roman demands; and they are now even tending to demand participation in their animistic ritual as a necessary qualification for the teachers in schools maintained by taxing a community where totemists are still a small minority.

It is perfectly possible to recognise a fundamental kinship between the totem sacrifice and the Eucharist, and yet to accept the latter as an edifying religious rite, if not as an indispensable means of grace. Such is, in fact, the attitude of the Rev. W. R. Inge in an essay contributed to *Contentio Veritatis;* and I mentioned the fact at the very beginning of this work as a proof that the historical method has by no means the sovereign efficacy ascribed to it by some modern rationalists. The name of Dr. Jevons, a profound student of the subject, may also be quoted in this connexion as of one who finds the totemistic theory quite compatible with orthodox Christian belief.[1] But with most minds a different result may be expected; and the historical method, if not decisive when taken alone, will go to reinforce the cumulative argument built up on many convergent probabilities.

In the Preface to his 'Religion of the Semites,' Robertson Smith gratefully acknowledges the assistance he has received from his friend and fellow-labourer, Mr. J. G. Frazer, now universally known as the author of the 'Golden Bough,' that most entertaining of folklorist treatises, who on his side admits with equal readiness his indebtedness to the lamented Semitic scholar. Indeed he tells us that 'the central idea' of the 'Golden Bough'—the conception of the slain god—is, he believes, derived directly from Smith.[2] This idea is related to the Christian doctrine of the Atonement very much as the totemistic explanation of sacrifice is related to the Eucharist. As worked out by Dr. Frazer—who takes the sole responsibility for this interpretation—the idea is that the universal spirit of vegetation, whence trees and plants derive their life, occasionally

[1] 'An Introduction to the History of Religion,' by F. B. Jevons, chapp. ix., x., xi., and xii.

[2] 'The Golden Bough,' p. x. (second edition).

incarnates itself in a man, with whose vitality theirs becomes henceforth bound up. By virtue of this peculiar attachment, their powers of increase are conceived as dependent on his continued vigour, and are liable to dwindle with his decay. The result might be a total failure of the harvest, involving a whole district in famine, were not drastic measures adopted for preventing so terrible a catastrophe. As the man who incarnates the spirit of vegetation cannot be kept alive and in good health for ever, he must be slain while still in the prime of life, passing on the representative office to his slayer and successor, who, after fulfilling it for a more or less protracted period, must in his turn submit to the same fate. Although developed in complete independence of Robertson Smith's sacrificial theory, about which Dr. Frazer has his doubts, there is here the same curious identification of the victim with the God, and of both with the priest, that the totemistic interpretation of sacrifice involves. But the incarnate corn-spirit, being a man, recalls more vividly the atoning and vicarious work of Christ.

The first edition of the 'Golden Bough,' dated 1890, suggested a possible application of its principles to Christianity; but the author left his readers to make it for themselves or not as they chose. On this point, and on the general subject of religion and its truth, or the contrary, his attitude seemed studiously non-committal. In the second edition, published ten years later (1900), it is openly hostile. Religion is defined as 'a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life,' and is therefore 'opposed in principle to science.' For what 'assumes the world to be directed by conscious agents, who may be turned from their purpose by persuasion, stands in fundamental antagonism to science, which takes for granted that the course of nature is not determined by the passions or caprice of personal beings, but by the operation of immutable laws acting mechanically.'[1] The standpoint is that of Auguste Comte, and even more pronounced than his or than Herbert Spencer's, religion being completely identified with theology. And, just as in Comte's system, the historical movement of thought is from religion to science. 'Here at

[1] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 63.

last, after groping about in the dark for countless ages, man has hit upon a clue to the labyrinth, a golden key that opens many locks in the treasury of nature. It is probably not too much to say that the hope of progress—moral and intellectual as well as material—in the future is bound up with the fortunes of science, and that every obstacle placed in the way of scientific discovery is a wrong to humanity.' Science may hereafter be superseded by something still higher, but meanwhile it is the best thing we have found.[1]

According to Dr. Frazer, the slain god is the incarnate spirit of vegetation, put to death under one embodiment that it may rise to more abundant life in another. He interprets the Book of Esther as a Jewish adaptation of an old Babylonian passion-play, in which Haman represents the victim and Mordecai the victorious reincarnation of the sacrificed god. He sees reason to think that the Jewish feast of Purim, whose origin Esther commemorates, was 'a continuation, under a changed name, of the Babylonian Sacaea, and that in celebrating it by the destruction of an effigy of Haman the modern Jews have kept up a reminiscence of the ancient custom of crucifying or hanging a man in the character of a god at the festival.' And he suggests the possibility that 'at an earlier time they may, like the Babylonians themselves, have regularly compelled a condemned criminal to play the tragic part, and that Christ thus perished in the character of Haman.'[2]

The theory of a Haman-Christ is open to many objections, which have been urged by Mr. Andrew Lang, with his usual ability, in a volume devoted to its criticism.[3] In reference to problems of comparative mythology the controversy has its interest, but hardly in reference to rationalism. An orthodox Christian might accept the theory, supposing it to be proved without finding his faith in Christ's divinity thereby shaken. It would be different if any probability could be made out for the notion that the earliest disciples had only learned to look on their Master as the Son of God when they saw the character forced upon him in that ghastly exhibition. But I do not understand that Dr. Frazer has gone so far as to suggest such a view. Rationalistic criticism, as at present constituted, does

[1] Vol. III., pp. 459–60. [2] III., p. 188.
[3] 'Magic and Religion.'

not admit that the earliest authentic reminiscences of Jesus give any countenance to the doctrine of his divinity, which must be carefully discriminated from the doctrine of his divine sonship, being, what that was not, incommunicable and unique. Beginning, to all appearances, with St. Paul, the doctrine of Christ as a divine incarnation is further developed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and becomes almost, though not quite, perfect in the Fourth Gospel. In other words, it is a Hellenistic idea, quite against the grain of Judaism, and explicable by reference to Greek-Aryan rather than to Semitic sources. Here, then, we have a genuine historical explanation based on documentary evidence of the highest class, and already in possession of the field. Rationalists will keep an open mind towards the Purim-theory, or any theory backed by such learning and ingenuity as Dr. Frazer's; but they can feel no prejudice in favour of what, so far, merely goes to disturb and confuse accepted views.

At the same time the value of the 'Golden Bough' as a contribution to historical rationalism remains unshaken by the amputation of any single appendage to its luxuriant growth. *Primo avulso non deficit alter.* The idea of the slain god rests on no single support, and may now be considered as definitely acquired by science. Whether as an element of mythology in general or of 'revealed religion' in particular, it pre-supposes the primitive creed of animism, figuring like other theological ideas as a survival into civilisation of that once all-enveloping explanation. Like his philosophical contemporaries, Mr. F. H. Bradley, Dr. McTaggart, and Mr. George Moore, Dr. Frazer has signalised the close of the nineteenth century and the dawn of its successor by a sincerity to which England has long been unused. 'It is indeed,' as he observes, 'a melancholy and in some respects a thankless task to strike at the foundations of beliefs in which, as in a strong tower, the hopes and aspirations of humanity through long ages have sought a refuge from the storm and stress of life. Yet sooner or later it is inevitable that the battery of the comparative method should breach those venerable walls, mantled over with the ivy and mosses and wild flowers of a thousand tender and sacred associations. At present we are dragging the guns into position: they have hardly yet begun to speak.' But 'whatever comes of it, wherever it leads us, we must follow truth

alone.'[1] To these noble and touching words I would only add that the metaphor is not, in my opinion, strictly appropriate. What really breached those venerable walls was the old-fashioned artillery of purely destructive rationalism. Of the historical method we may more appropriately say that it sends troops to occupy the positions which that artillery has made impossible for the enemy to maintain. And should this occupation not be practicable, or dropping metaphor, should the origin of false beliefs not be explicable, their falsity will none the less have been established. This indeed is a point on which the theologians are agreed with the rationalists. For all alike hold that ancestor-worship, nature-worship, totemism, and the belief in a slain god, when connected with other than Christian traditions, are illusory religions, whether we can account for them or not. It is therefore illogical to claim for one religion the exceptional position of being entitled not to end until we can tell how it began.

The comparative study of religions does more than dispel the argument from authority; it dispels the argument from utility. Customs based on the most irrational beliefs have done good service in their time. We are assured that without totemism the domestication of animals would never have been accomplished. Sheep and oxen would not have made themselves at home with human beings had they not found that their lives were safe in the vicinity of certain encampments, and their lives would not have been safe if they had not been worshipped.[2] Corn would have been all consumed and none kept for seed had not the idea of a Corn-spirit suggested the preservation of a sheaf over the winter.[3] The very curious idea known as taboo, whereby contact with certain persons or things is believed to be fraught with disastrous consequences, not merely to the individual first affected, but to all who communicate with him while the taboo continues, has been credited with first establishing the sanctity of life, marriage, and property.[4] Supposing all this to be admitted, it would prove that the absurdest beliefs may be the most salutary; but it would also suggest that such beliefs have a merely provisional

[1] *Op. cit.*, preface to the second edition, p. xxii.
Jevons's 'Introduction,' p. 156. [3] *Op. cit.*, p. 212. [4] P. 87.

value, and that other beliefs bearing no sort of resemblance to them may subsequently come to take their place without involving the incidental disadvantages of a baseless superstition. Ophelism as a permanent method of faith receives no countenance from primitive culture.

Anthropologists sometimes treat the antiquity of man as a topic coming within the range of their studies. In reference to rationalism it does not properly belong to the historical method; but as no better opportunity for introducing it has been offered, I may as well discuss it here, within the very narrow limits which that reference prescribes. The question has never come very much to the front in religious controversy, and what I shall have to say relates rather to its possibilities than to any actual use that has been made of the known facts in prejudice of religious belief.[1]

The question how long man has existed on the earth has no immediate connexion with the question of his origin. He might have been supernaturally created some millions of years, or naturally evolved some thousands of years ago. It so happened that Sir Charles Lyell put together the evidence for a much higher antiquity than seemed to be ascribed to our race in the Biblical record not long after Darwin's theory was published, and that he expressed his agreement with Darwin in the volume which contained it. But beyond the obvious fact that both theories apparently contradict the Bible, they had nothing in common. The contradiction is much more precise, if not really greater with the geologist than with the naturalist. For not only does Genesis furnish us with a series of names and dates beginning with the Creation, extending down to the Flood, and continued without interruption through the genealogies of Israel's supposed progenitors, but this chronological system is quoted and endorsed in the Gospel according to St. Luke. There are textual differences about the exact ages to which the patriarchs lived; but the higher figures would only throw back the beginning of human history to about 7000 years ago; and in all cases the recorded ages are far longer than physiologists would admit to be possible. Lyell did not commit himself to

[1] So far, it has received most prominence in a work called 'The Veil of the Temple,' written by a professed defender of religion, Mr. W. H. Mallock.

such exact statements as the Biblical writers; but, as I have already mentioned, in conversation he spoke of 50000 years as the least that geology could accept.

Since he wrote far higher estimates have been made; and figures more than twenty times greater are now popularly quoted as the indubitable results of scientific calculation. Such estimates, however, assume that the glacial period, to which man dates back, was produced by certain changes in the shape of the earth's orbit, combined with other changes in the course of which winter in the northern hemisphere periodically comes to coincide with the earth's aphelion or maximum distance from the sun. Now this theory, although popular with English geologists, is not admitted by French geologists, who rather seek for the cause of glaciation in changes of terrestrial conformation, whose occurrence, although remote when compared with the historical record, is much more recent than the astronomical phenomena invoked by James Croll and his followers. It seems also hardly probable that the human race should have remained practically stationary for so many thousand centuries as must have intervened between its first evolution and the dawn of historical civilisation, were the higher estimate to be accepted.

Natural religion need not interest itself in these debates. A God who never interferes with the sequences of mechanical causation, and never specially discloses his purposes to the dwellers in darkness or to the seekers after light, may abandon them to their own devices with equal indifference for a hundred centuries or for a thousand millenniums. But for supernatural religion, or what is called revelation, the question of man's antiquity seems, in my judgment, a matter of life and death. With the knowledge of history and geography possessed only a century ago, it had already been sufficiently improbable that a single small nation should have been favoured, to the exclusion of all other nations, with an exceptional knowledge of the divine attributes, and still more improbable that the intelligence of God's appearance on earth in human form should have been suffered to remain hid from the vast majority of earth's human population, supposing their eternal or temporal welfare to have been peculiarly dependent on hearing the good news. This fact had long been felt as a difficulty which missionary zeal might

cover but could not remove. And the difficulty goes on increasing *pari passu* with the extension of our views about the entire duration of the human race in past time, and the proportionate multiplication of human souls estranged in life and death from God. There is a limit in the progressive series where, as the logicians say, quantity passes over into quality, or to speak more plainly, a point where the improbability becomes so great that doubt is hardened into negation. I think we may say without exaggeration that it has been reached at a million years. But need we go so far? Would not a tenth or a twentieth of that figure suffice? Lyell must surely have felt that no more was needed to ruin the popular religion, with its baby-house chronology, when he refrained from publicly claiming that very moderate amount, while privately believing that no less was demanded by the facts of geology as then ascertained.

I can remember the time when Lyell's views were regarded with not less horror than Darwin's by conservative religionists. By some peculiar process of inference they have since persuaded themselves that Darwinism has left supernatural religion stronger than before. I have not heard that prae-historic archaeology lends itself to similar uses. But when the attention of apologists has been called to the subject, I cannot doubt that their ingenuity will prove equal to the occasion.

To sum up. What anthropology has done is to interpret the whole range of Christian dogma and ritual, by comparison with more primitive beliefs, as an outgrowth from the same animistic philosophy which is their common groundwork, even to the identification of minute details in their structure with developments independently reached by tribes living at a vast distance from the seat of its origin. Thus it has been made far easier to understand such alleged mysteries as survivals working their way up from the lower strata of culture, under favour of social disorganisation, than as secrets communicated from above. And further, while so much that is Christian comes to light just where we should expect to find it on the theory that it is a natural product of the human mind, we do not find revealed Christianity where on the supernaturalist theory it ought not to have been wanting, that is among the three thousand or more generations of reasonable beings living in no less need of it than the South Sea islanders or the Central Africans are

living now, and apparently as capable of appreciating it had it been sent.

The most distinct gains to English rationalism during the later years of the century were made in the higher criticism of the Old Testament; and these also may be described as a successful application of the historical method. Here, however, we have not to deal, as in preceding sections, with original work done by English writers, but merely with the popularisation of Dutch and German science. To Colenso, as I pointed out in a former chapter, belongs the merit of having, although unconsciously, given a new direction to Pentateuchal criticism. Thus it came to pass that soon after the appearance of his First Part the whole problem which had so long taxed the ingenuity of Continental scholars was taken up by them once more and solved with a completeness which, from one point of view, left nothing to be desired. Our countrymen had merely to translate into popular language the results reached elsewhere, and accepted after a brief struggle by the practically unanimous verdict of competent authorities. And even this modest work of interpretation was done in the first instance, not by an English theologian, but by the same Scotchman, Professor Robertson Smith, whose momentous services to the comparative study of religions we had lately to consider. By his popular lectures on 'The Old Testament in the Jewish Church' and 'The Prophets of Israel,' he gave a wide circulation to the new views, while at the same time by admitting articles from the pen of Wellhausen into the new edition of the 'Encyclopaedia Britannica,' he furnished the distinguished scholar who was their chief exponent with an opportunity for addressing the British public in his own person.

What the new views amounted to has already been stated by anticipation in an earlier chapter. The collection of documents which we call the Mosaic legislation falls into three distinct codes, dating from periods separated by long intervals of time, and marking different stages of civilisation. The first is contained in Exodus, chapp. xx.–xxiii., 1–19; the second in Deuteronomy xii.–xxvi.; the third in the central portion of the Pentateuch, including the later chapters of Exodus, much of Numbers, and the whole of Leviticus. The earliest code is very

ancient, but no part of it need be anterior to the conquest of Canaan; the Deuteronomic code was first promulgated, and probably composed, in the reign of Josiah; the third or priestly code is, with some exceptions, post-exilian. Many narrative portions, especially those containing precise numerical statements, including the six days' creation and one account of the Flood, are similarly post-exilian, and bear the appearance of deliberate fiction. Other stories of a more legendary character cannot be traced higher than a period long posterior to the events they record, some give conflicting versions of the same event, and many contain so much of the fairy-tale or marvellous element as to deprive them of all historical value except in so far as they illustrate the beliefs and customs of their authors.

Every objection brought by earlier rationalists against the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua, considered as a recital of facts, holds its ground victoriously in presence of the new criticism. Egyptian and Babylonian archaeology gives their narratives no countenance whatever,[1] but rather serves to show from what sources some of the fairy-tale elements have been derived. But under the guidance of the historical method we now understand better how such things ever came to be believed. What we seem to trace is the history of certain confederated pastoral tribes of comparatively pure morals, who conquered and incorporated a large agricultural population, worshipping at their holy places and adopting their religious festivals. As civilisation progressed a special class of priests, which in time became hereditary, was differentiated. Ministering at the altar and living by the altar, these officials had neither the will nor the power to forbid the impure or superstitious practices into which contact with a higher material culture seduced the worshippers of Iahveh. That important service fell to a different class of men, the prophets, or rather to a small minority among these, who habitually associated the teaching of righteousness with fidelity to Israel's tribal God. But the prophetic programme could only be carried out by a coalition with the

[1] The fact that certain names mentioned in Genesis xiv. have been identified as having belonged to actual personages in history cannot be quoted as a proof to the contrary, any more than coins bearing the name of Cymbeline can be quoted to prove that Shakespeare's play is founded on fact.

priesthood of Judah, now become a hereditary caste. It was in the interest of the Jerusalemite priesthood that sacrifices should only be offered at their temple; it was in the interest of the reforming prophets that sacrifices at the half-heathen 'high places' should be discontinued. The Deuteronomist legislation represents an arrangement made between the two parties by which this centralisation of worship, first attempted under Josiah, was passed off with the help of a forged document as the original design of Moses. At the same time the great spring festival, evidently of native Palestinian origin, known to us as the Passover, was reinterpreted in a sense never put on it before, as a commemoration of Israel's flight from Egypt. Nearly two centuries later, by another restriction, the privilege of offering sacrifice was confined to a single family of Levites, and a much more complicated ritual was promulgated, necessitating various provisions, only possible in a hierocratic community of very limited dimensions, whose stability was guaranteed by its incorporation with a great military state. The absurdities pointed out by Colenso arose in great part from the necessary incompatibility of such arrangements with the life of a wandering horde in the desert; and the silence of the earlier Hebrew historians about their existence is explained by the fact that they were not instituted by the mythical legislator of the Exodus, nor at any date when the Jews formed an independent kingdom.

In this way the historical method has rationalised Hebrew history to the same extent that it has rationalised any other history of which no more is known. It would be futile to pretend that the admirable sagacity of the higher critics has read the ultimate secret of the Hebrew race, that they have detected the primal origin of that ethical monotheism which it is the peculiar glory of Israel to have first worked out for himself and then to have imposed upon the civilised world. But there is nothing singular or exceptional about our ignorance in this respect. The same mystery envelops the origin of all other primitive faiths, good or bad. Nor is it primitive faiths alone that guard their secret so well. Every race, every nation even, has its peculiar endowments, whose ultimate source defies our intensest scrutiny. Greece and Rome also had their instinct, their genius, the one for art, for science, for humanity, the other

for conquest and organisation, of which we can say little more than that it was there, roughly determining the conditions of its manifestation without pretending to exhaust them. But then neither do we say that the historical existence of Apollo and the Muses would solve the problem of Hellenism, nor do we argue with the heathen contemporaries of St. Augustine that the duration of Rome's empire proves the truth of Rome's religion. Rationalism assimilates. It begins by telling us to interpret the Bible like any other book. It ends by telling us to explain the religion of the Bible—or of the Church—like any other religion, like any other mentality that has begun, that has grown, that has decayed, that will die.

We are now in a better position to understand the true meaning and force of evolution in reference to rationalism. What Romanes urged in answer to Paley's argument from design admits of wider applications. Certain organic structures are quoted in evidence of a creative intelligence from their apparent adaptation to the functions which they now fulfil. But if it can be shown that such structures have arisen by gradual modifications from organs fulfilling an entirely different purpose, the alleged evidence disappears. Now the greater number of what are called Mosaic prescriptions and institutions fall under the category of things which have not been supernaturally revealed but naturally evolved. And it will not do to say that they were indeed revealed, but at a later period of Hebrew history than used to be supposed. For had the authors of the Deuteronomic and priestly legislations been favoured with supernatural communications abrogating or extending the original code, they would hardly have failed to mention the fact, performing miracles, if necessary, as Moses did, in attestation of their divine commission. Unfortunately for their credit with posterity, Hilkiah and Ezra did no such thing. Being perfectly aware that their new enactments, however excellent, had no claim to supernatural authorship, they passed them off as Mosaic, and either invented stories like that of Korah Dathan and Abiram, or prophesied a coming Babylonian conquest to terrify the unbelievers for whose conviction they had no present signs and wonders to produce. Where so much is proved to be the result of natural causes, we have surely a right to infer that the first beginnings of the evolutionary process were also naturally

caused; and in this opinion we shall have on our side those later Biblical writers whose very free handling of the earliest documents shows how little they believed in the divine authority of the men who compiled them or whose teachings they contain.

The first Englishman to give a popular account of the results reached by the higher criticism of the Pentateuch was the eminent naturalist and writer, Professor St. George Mivart. In the seventies Mivart had been a conspicuous champion of what he was pleased to call Ultramontane Catholicism. According to him, it allowed greater freedom to scientific speculation than any other form of ecclesiastical government. He reached this conclusion by a somewhat remarkable line of reasoning. A Pope acting in his capacity as infallible head of the Church had condemned the true theory of the earth's motion as contrary to Scripture. All Catholics now admit that the decision was a grievous error. But in the opinion of nearly all Catholics it is an error that leaves Papal infallibility unaffected. Whether the earth moves is not a question of faith or morals but of physical science. Certainly, replies Mivart, but unfortunately for the credit of the Holy See, the Pope who condemned Galileo thought otherwise, and made it a question of faith. Now let us suppose a modern Pope, speaking *ex cathedra*, should condemn evolution as contrary to faith. His verdict will carry no more authority than that of his predecessor, and will have as little claim on our obedience. So far as science goes, the thunders of the Vatican are *bruta fulmina*, and may be disregarded with impunity.

Such a very convenient principle may of course be extended far beyond the limits of physical science, and Mivart did in fact extend it to every subject that interested him, treating, for instance, the dogma of the Virgin-birth as a manifest absurdity, not destined to pass current among the faithful much longer. Naturally he welcomed advanced Biblical criticism for its fatal effects on another infallibility, namely that of the Bible, which, as he took care to inform the English public, is more a Catholic than a Protestant dogma, having been decreed by the Council of Trent, and with still more definiteness by the Vatican Council. But Hebrew scholarship was not one of his multifarious

accomplishments, and for some time he believed that without it the value of what Kuenen and Wellhausen had done could not be appreciated. On discovering, however, that the method by which their conclusions have been reached could be made perfectly clear to any intelligent reader with the help of a good translation of the Old Testament, he threw himself with ardour into this new study, and soon found himself able to lay its most important results before the readers of the 'Nineteenth Century' —that is the whole educated English public—in July, 1887, just at the time when political reaction was allowing the freer ventilation of religious questions.[1]

'Mivart is stupendous,' observed Matthew Arnold on reading the article. Fitzjames Stephen, who for some time past had given up all religious belief, asked whether this enthusiastic and unexpected convert to rationalism was prepared to treat the New Testament as he had treated the Old. Mivart replied that he had no objection whatever to such a proceeding. Modern criticism, he understood, was tending rather to confirm than to shake the authenticity of the Christian Scriptures. For the rest Catholicism would rather gain than lose if it could be shown that they contained errors. His more logical or more outspoken antagonist thought that he was 'proposing to put a match in a powder barrel and expect (*sic*) half to explode and the other half to remain unaffected.'[2]

Religious belief is not a powder magazine, least of all in England, the land of compromise. Three years after the appearance of Mivart's article the higher criticism was accepted, at least to some extent, by a band of clergymen constituting as nearly as possible an official representation of the modern High Church school at Oxford. The volume announcing this momentous change of front was entitled 'Lux Mundi.' It consisted of twelve essays written by eleven divines, all of high University standing, six contributors being more particularly associated, then or formerly, with Keble College, while the editor, now famous as Bishop Gore, was Principal of Pusey House.

Of the twelve essays four alone have much interest in the present connexion, those on 'The Christian Doctrine of God,' by

[1] 'The Roman Catholic Church and Biblical Criticism,' 'Nineteenth Century' for July, 1887.

[2] 'The Life of Sir J. F. Stephen,' p. 455.

the Rev. Aubrey Moore, on 'The Incarnation in Relation to Development,' by the Rev. J. R. Illingworth, on 'The Atonement,' by the Rev. and Hon. Arthur Lyttelton, and on 'The Holy Spirit and Inspiration,' by the Editor. The last named excited most attention, chiefly for reasons which would hardly have recommended it to Pusey's favour. According to Dr. Gore, the earlier narratives in Genesis, 'before the call of Abraham,' may quite well be 'of the nature of myth,' although 'their inspiration is as conspicuous as 'that of any part of Scripture.'[1] The three successive codes attributed to Moses may date from widely separated periods. Jonah and Daniel may be 'dramatic compositions worked up on a basis of history.'[2] The book of Chronicles may be unhistorical, if only we admit that it is 'not conscious perversion but unconscious idealizing of history.'[3] A good word is said for the historical reality of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but the very guarded language of the writer does not commit him to maintaining it as an article of faith.

Dr. Gore is aware of the objection that the 'theory of original sin is built simply on the supposition that the early chapters of Genesis represent literal history. It falls to the ground if they are myth and not history.'[4] Of course the supposed objector is referring to the theory developed in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. But to St. Paul Dr. Gore makes not the faintest reference. He gives us nothing but vague generalities about 'Christ's authority,' and 'the moral experience of Christendom,' quite irrelevant in this connexion. If St. Paul is defensible, he should be defended; if he was mistaken about the individuality of Adam, his dogmatics fall to pieces, and with them the theory of New Testament inspiration. Now this is an inspiration with which the essayist does not play fast and loose as he plays with the inspiration of the Old Testament. At least the idealising element, pleaded in extenuation of the Chronicler's fabrications, 'could not without results disastrous to the Christian Creed be admitted in the New Testament.'[5] The reason given is rather odd. Because the Old Testament writers anticipate (truly as we must suppose) the future fulfilment of their ideal in Christ, therefore they are entitled to relate as history what did not really happen in the past. The Evangelists, on the other hand,

[1] 'Lux Mundi,' p. 357. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 355.
[3] P. 353. [4] P. 537. [5] P. 354.

writing about a fulfilled ideal, are to be taken as telling 'what really happened, and is no idealisation.' But to St. Paul both Adam and Christ are in the past, and both are equally real, or if the one is merely ideal, so also may be the other. Again, if ideals, when located in the past, are simple fictions, why not also ideals located in the future? And if the disciples were deceived into accepting the ideal Adam as a real man, why should they not also have been deceived in thinking they saw the ideal Christ of prophecy realised in Jesus?

Arthur Lyttelton's Essay on the Atonement involves a wider departure from the doctrinal standards of Tractarian orthodoxy than any other in the volume—a circumstance perhaps not unconnected with the fact that its author belonged to the university of William Law, Coleridge, and Maurice. His positive views on the subject of Christ's death and its effect are neither well argued nor, indeed, particularly intelligible; but he has the good sense and the courage to repudiate the notion that 'the work of Christ consisted of His endurance of our punishment in order that we might not endure it.'[1] 'As a simple matter of fact, and experience, the sufferings and the pains of death which He endured have not been remitted to us; and that which is remitted, the eternal penalty of alienation from God, was not, could not, be endured by Him.'[2] The adoption of Maurice's theology is complete; complete also the absence of reference to his works.

Aubrey Moore and Dr. Illingworth agree in accepting evolution as a general principle without pledging themselves to any particular theory about it, Darwinian or otherwise. In their opinion it confirms the doctrine of Christ as the divine Word, the Logos, by whom all things were made. It is natural that what was first suggested by Greek thought should find some analogies in the modern science which is ultimately derived from Greece. Similarly the analogies between Christianity and the world's other religions are interpreted as fresh proofs of the doctrine of the Eternal Word. Whatever they contained of good is credited to the divine activity, whatever was bad in them is debited to human corruption. By such methods anything may be made out of anything; and they might be applied with equal success to any other theology.

[1] 'Lux Mundi,' p. 309. [2] *Ibid.*

But some facts remain that refuse to be pulled into shape. 'The pre-Christian religions,' says Dr. Illingworth, 'were the age-long prayer. The Incarnation was the answer.'[1] It shows singular obduracy on the part of God to delay his answer for fifty thousand years at least, and singular obduracy on the part of man, that as many millions of human souls should have refused to accept the answer in the time which has elapsed since it came.

'Lux Mundi' had a success comparable to that of 'Essays and Reviews,' but without exciting anything like the same scandal. Still Dr. Gore's surrender to the higher criticism drew down some severe criticisms from the opposite extremes of opinion. Liddon and Huxley agreed in maintaining that the credibility of the Gospel was bound up with the literal truth of what Pusey House had allowed to be myths. What counted for more than the ground actually abandoned was the want of any fixed principle for determining what could or should be kept. The distinction between the Old and New Testaments, as regards their historical credibility, was purely arbitrary, and might be shifted indefinitely as the canons of evidence were altered. 'The Church' to which Pusey House appealed was without an official organ for determining what was of faith; and Mivart had shown that the more substantial Church of the Vatican could no more be tied with indissoluble knots than certain other organs of communication with the invisible world. Huxley had good reason to anticipate the time when some Bampton lecturer of the future would proclaim a 'Faith no longer in contact with fact of any kind, standing for ever proudly inaccessible to the attacks of the infidel.'[2]

Two years later Canon Driver's 'Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament' (1891) completed and systematised that adoption of the higher criticism which 'Lux Mundi' had inaugurated. It was, as Canon Cheyne has observed, 'an event in the history of this study.'[3] At the same time he justly censures it as too moderate and too much of a compromise. In criticising his colleague, this great Hebrew scholar admits that he is equally criticising himself. There had been a time when Professor Cheyne had also felt bound to mediate between pure

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 205. [2] 'Collected Essays,' Vol. IV., p. 238.
[3] 'Founders of Old Testament Criticism,' p. 248.

science and tradition.[1] But, writing in 1893, he announces that the time for such half-measures has gone by; especially he hints that the time has come for treating the New Testament with as much freedom as the Old. It will be remembered that this extension of criticism was precisely what Fitzjames Stephen had made the crucial question in his controversy with Mivart. English theologians were living in a fool's paradise. They believed, or professed to believe, that the historical character of the Gospels and Acts—more especially of the Johannine Gospel—had been vindicated by Lightfoot and Westcott. James Martineau had indeed quite recently reasserted the positions of the Tübingen school in his most vigorous style.[2] But he was very old, and might without injustice be thought too prejudiced in favour of views adopted forty years earlier.

Fitzjames Stephen himself was fond of reading Renan's works, not for the sake of what others most admired in them, the reconstruction of history from legend with the help of geography and imagination, but for their destructive criticism of the legend as it stands. This, perhaps aided by other books, had convinced him that Christianity, for all practical purposes, was not true.[3] Probably no other English judge, and not many living Englishmen, would have had the honest simplicity to take Renan's arguments for what they are worth and without heavy deductions on the score of the consummate style in which they are clothed. Besides, although a good reading knowledge of French is much commoner among us than the merest smattering of German, England has in theology always been a satellite of Germany, and more especially since 1800 in that department of theology which is called Biblical criticism. We must therefore glance at the critical conclusions reached in that country if we would understand the scientific foundations on which English rationalism now reposes.

In Germany, the historical method of criticism had been applied to the New Testament by a band of scholars working together at an earlier period than that which saw its successful application to the Hexateuch. Baur and his colleagues of the

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 259.
[2] In his 'Seat of Authority in Religion' (1890).
[3] 'Life,' p. 369.

Tübingen school were above all historians; indeed, two of them, Zeller and Schwegler, attained greater distinction in the history of Greek philosophy and in the critical analysis of the sources of early Roman history than in their studies on primitive Christianity. Their method appealed strongly to Englishmen; and in an earlier chapter of this volume I have had occasion to show how speedily and how profoundly the course of English rationalism was affected by the speculations of Baur and his followers. R. W. Mackay, James Martineau, and Jowett were deeply tinged with their views. But the only English divine who adopted them publicly and in their entirety was Dr. Samuel Davidson, at one time Professor of Biblical Literature in the Lancashire Independent College, Manchester, a position whence he was driven on a charge of heresy in 1857. Davidson's labours covered the whole field of Biblical criticism, and are marked by the haste and superficiality which such comprehensiveness almost necessarily involves; while in any case they would soon have been rendered obsolete by subsequent enquiry. In the Old Testament, although naturally too advanced for the Independents of fifty years ago, he remained too conservative; in the New Testament he was too radical, and perhaps his radicalism did the Tübingen school, of which, as I have said, he was a disciple, some mischief by pressing its most extreme conclusions on a timid religious public as established certainties. Part of the Tübingen system was to condemn every Pauline epistle except Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians as a rather late forgery, and in general to give the opposition between Paul and Peter, the Judaising and the Gentile Christians, more importance than it really possessed; and because it was found in error on these points, prejudiced or hasty theologians concluded that the system was unsound throughout.

In point of fact these were little more than side issues, and their decision left the fundamental question between Baur and his opponents untouched. That question was the genuineness of the Fourth Gospel; and English thought has fastened on it with unerring instinct from the very first as the one whose importance threw every other question into the shade. 'I,' said Shorthouse, 'am a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, and the fundamental principle of His teaching was belief in Himself as God.'[1]

[1] 'Life and Letters of J. H. Shorthouse,' p. 91.

This was indeed the teaching of the Johannine Jesus; the teaching of the Synoptic Jesus was not this, but rather the contrary. If the Fourth Gospel was the work of the Master's most intimate disciple, then we find ourselves face to face with almost insoluble contradictions. If it was written by some mystical enthusiast a century or so after the events related, all becomes clear. For in the meanwhile St. Paul's teaching had intervened; Hellenistic ideas imported from Tarsus or from Alexandria had come into play, first the Platonic idea of an archetypal man, then the idea, still more heathen, still more alien from Judaism, of a divine incarnation. To have seen this truth was the indestructible service of the Tübingen school; their exaggerations, their errors, leave it unaffected. The authenticity of the Fourth Gospel had been gravely doubted before Baur wrote about it, among others by the great Biblical critic De Wette. But he was the first to explain it, or at least to create a method for explaining it. Perhaps the Gospel is more Jewish than he thought; perhaps the final step of identifying Jesus with Jehovah was not so much an advance on St. Paul's metaphysics as a vigorous reassertion of Hebrew monotheism against the Greek polytheism which under the form of an incomplete incarnation was threatening to destroy it. Anyhow, it is to the method of historical evolution that we must look for the ultimate deliverance of those whom mere negative rationalism cannot reach from the central dogma of Anglican sacerdotalism as reconstituted among us.

The Tübingen school never won general adhesion among German theologians; but Baur's criticism of the Fourth Gospel has made more and more converts outside his immediate following, and after becoming the accepted view among Continental Protestants, is now making its way into Roman Catholic circles. Within the Church of England it has received a sort of official recognition, if not acceptance, through the admission of an article substantially agreeing with Baur's view, by Professor Paul Schmiedel, into the 'Encyclopaedia Biblica.' This monumental work, one of whose two editors is Canon Cheyne, marks the extreme point reached by English rationalism within the limits of Christianity during the nineteenth century, at whose close the first volume appeared, although the last was not published until 1903. It contains much more daring speculations than

any put forward by Baur, as when Canon Cheyne resolves Moses into a whole tribe of Israelites, or when Professor Van Manen denies that a single one of the Pauline epistles was written by the missionary Apostle. On these and similar questions rationalism may calmly await the verdict of free Biblical scholarship. It will neither be strengthened by the success of such heresies, nor discredited by their failure. But the present state of the Johannine problem is of real importance as a decisive rebuff to the boast that the tide of destructive criticism had been rolled back by certain Bishops whose authority was worth no more than the opinion of a Roman Cardinal on any point of dogmatic difference between Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century would have been worth.

The more conservative side of New Testament criticism is ably represented by the relative articles in Hastings's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' a work issued concurrently with the 'Encyclopaedia Biblica.' But as regards the Old Testament, their respective attitudes do not essentially differ, Wellhausen's theory being accepted by both. I have said that in theology England is a satellite of Germany; and no doubt the rapid conversion of German scholars to Wellhausen's views had much to do with their extraordinary success among ourselves. There is not the same unanimity in Germany about New Testament criticism, nor probably will there be for long. But a certain approach to it may be traced; and the result can hardly be without its reaction here. Ewald showed at his worst in criticism; but his name counted for much among English liberals; and his adherence to the traditional view of the Fourth Gospel may have relieved some enquirers from the trouble of examining the evidence for themselves. There are no Ewalds now. Harnack is sometimes quoted on the conservative side; and assuredly one might look far before finding so strong a name. But if authority is to count for anything, it must be taken in full, and on the two most important of all questions Harnack's authority is thrown on the negative side. 'The Fourth Gospel,' he curtly states, 'is not by the Apostle John.' As a source for the life of Jesus it is of hardly any service, however useful as an indirect evidence of the impression he produced.[1]

[1] 'Das Wesen des Christenthums,' p. 13.

On the question of miracles and their possibility his language is less decisive, but it is sufficient for the purposes of rationalism. The order of nature is never really interrupted; although at the same time our knowledge of nature is not sufficient to determine how far, for instance, the power of mind over disease may extend. But of some recorded miracles we can say with confidence that they never happened. 'It will never again be believed that the earth stood still, that an ass spoke, that a storm was stopped by a word.'[1] Harnack's list of incredibilities might evidently be extended far enough to include the Virgin-birth, the turning of water into wine, the feeding of the five thousand, and the raising of Lazarus.

Still better evidence of how average opinion in Germany now stands is supplied by the recent publication of some cheap little handbooks composed by eminent scholars for diffusing a knowledge of the history of religion among the German people. The first volume in the first series deals with the authorities for the life of Jesus, and is written by Professor Paul Wernle of Basel. Here the comparison between the Synoptics and John is worked out in more detail than by Harnack, but the result is the same. The two accounts are radically irreconcilable, and the Johannine account is the one that we must reject as unhistorical.[2] Opinion in the Swiss universities is more advanced than in the universities of the German empire; and I should not have quoted Professor Wernle if he stood alone. But the significant thing is that Wernle's examination of the sources has been accepted by the next contributor to the series, Professor Bousset of Göttingen, as the basis for a companion volume—I will not say on the life of Jesus, for Bousset thinks that the materials for a biography in the true sense do not exist, but—on his personality and teaching. Now Göttingen is Ewald's own University, and has never, I believe, been remarkable for the radicalism of its religious teaching. German theology is unlikely to recede from a point so little advanced that it has been reached by a Göttingen Professor.

Where Germany stands to-day in criticism England may be expected to stand to-morrow. Among the clergy there are already indications pointing in that direction. Dr. Edwin Abbott has long been a pioneer in the higher criticism of the

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

[2] 'Die Quellen des Lebens Jesu,' pp. 14–31.

New Testament. His contributions to the Synoptic problem have the effect of weakening the evidentiary value of the first Three Gospels, and he rejects the apostolic authorship of the Fourth. He also agrees with Harnack in rejecting such miracles as are real violations of physical causation. But for many years he stood alone, in the sense of not receiving public support. It has recently to a certain extent been given him by two of the writers in a volume already more than once referred to, called 'Contentio Veritatis.' It consists of seven essays contributed by six Oxford tutors, and is perhaps more remarkable for what it concedes than for what it contends to be true. The fifth essay, on 'Modern Criticism and the New Testament,' by the Rev. W. C. Allen, is in form apologetic, but it puts the arguments against the apostolicity of the Johannine writings pretty strongly, and finally leaves the question undecided. Far more remarkable is the first essay, on 'The Ultimate Basis of Theism,' by the celebrated philosophical critic, Dr. Hastings Rashdall. It contains a very lucid discussion on miracles, coming substantially to the same conclusions as Harnack. 'The genuine Theist cannot regard a miracle as *a priori* inconceivable, but the observed uniformity of Nature makes it difficult to accept the evidence for a "suspension" of natural laws.'[1] 'It is not inconceivable that God should have governed the world otherwise than in accordance with general laws (*i.e.* laws of uniform sequence), but, as He does not appear to do so, there must be some good reason why He does not.'[2] Now, under pain of plunging into a bottomless scepticism, it must be admitted that there are some physical sequences on whose persistence we can reckon with certainty. Thus we may at once pronounce such an event as the stoppage of the earth's motion, recorded in Joshua, to be impossible. 'And if this principle of criticism be admitted, its application cannot' stop 'with the Old Testament.' 'Some of what are called the "nature-miracles"' —presumably including those mentioned in connexion with Harnack's rule—will come under the same condemnation.

Dr. Rashdall finds a place for the Trinity in his philosophy of theism. But it seems to be a Trinity of attributes rather than a plurality of persons. God is essentially Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. The Wisdom or Logos is the whole world

[1] 'Contentio Veritatis,' Summary, p. 2. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

as eternally present in idea in the Divine Mind, and creation is the gradual unfolding of that idea. 'Human nature is the same in principle with the divine.' 'A historical person embodying the highest ideal of human life may be regarded as in a unique sense a revelation of God.'[1]

This view of the Incarnation savours strongly of Sabellianism. According to Milman, Sabellius taught that 'it was the same Deity, under different forms, who existed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.' Milman observes that 'a more modest and unoffending Sabellianism might perhaps be imagined in accordance with modern philosophy. The manifestations of the same Deity, or rather of his attributes, . . . may have been successively made in condescension to our weakness of intellect. It would be the same Deity, assuming, as it were, an objective form, so as to come within the scope of the human mind; a real difference, as regards the conception of man, perfect unity in its subjective existence.'[2] Something of this sort seems also to have been the creed in which Thomas Mozley found rest during the closing years of a long life, chiefly devoted to the service of the High Church party, when, breaking away from dogmatic theology, he came to regard the idea of a triune God as both monstrous and unscriptural. But as Gibbon, with his usual good sense, observed, under this system, 'the Logos is no longer a person but an attribute'; and its incarnation is 'reduced to a mere inspiration of the Divine Wisdom, which filled the soul and directed all the actions of the man Jesus.' 'The Sabellian ends where the Ebionite had begun,'[3]—or, as we should now put it, he is a Unitarian in disguise. In fact, there seems to be nothing essential in Dr. Rashdall's creed to which James Martineau could not have subscribed. The three questions of the authorship of the Johannine gospel, of miracles, and of what the Incarnation really means, are intimately connected; while, again, the continued existence of an Anglican priesthood—or of any priesthood—claiming supernatural powers, largely depends on the solution they are destined to receive.

The disintegrating action of the higher criticism, working in

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 49. [2] 'History of Christianity,' Vol. II., pp. 356–7.
[3] 'History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' Vol. II., p. 346.

close alliance with the historical method on Scripture, is of older date than the same criticism as applied to Greek and Roman antiquity. Richard Simon precedes Perizonius, Bentley, and Vico; Collins precedes Beaufort; Middleton, Astruc, Semler, and Eichhorn precede Wolf and Niebuhr. But classical philology has in its turn reacted on Biblical studies, helping to maintain a high standard of evidence, to create an atmosphere of free enquiry. We have seen how Wolf and Niebuhr contemplated the application of their critical methods to Hebrew literature; how Dr. Arnold recognised the same connexion; how Jowett's doubts about the Gospel-history were first aroused by lectures on Niebuhr. And conversely conservative believers have come to think of their cause as somehow bound up with the unity of Homer and the credibility of Livy. In fact there is a consensus of studies; and a successful rehabilitation of the old classical traditions would create a sort of *præjudicium* in favour of theological reaction. There has, however, been no such retrograde movement on any line. Some extravagant theories have failed to hold their ground, or rather, having never gained general acceptance, have silently disappeared. No one now thinks that the two Homeric epics were forged in the age of Pericles, that the siege of Plataea was invented as a lesson in engineering, or that Plato's profoundest dialogues are spurious compositions. Certain orations have been restored to Cicero which even the cautious George Long had summarily condemned. Various blackamoors have had their coats of whitewash removed. All this goes to prove what rationalists will not deny, that new opinions are not necessarily true opinions. But on the most important points of all the labours of successive scholars have led to conclusions supported by a sufficiently strong majority to command the same deference that is given to the authority of experts in physical science. There is this practical agreement as regards the highly composite character of the Homeric poems, although from the greater skilfulness of the Greeks in literary architecture, the joins and fissures are far less obvious than in the structure of the Hexateuch. And what is more remarkable, we find the same agreement in the much more revolutionary views of early Roman history, whose development marks the second half of

the nineteenth century, first in England and then on the Continent.

In a former chapter I took occasion to speak of Cornewall Lewis's work on the 'Credibility of Early Roman History,' and of its relation to Colenso's Examination of the Pentateuch. At the time of its appearance, and long afterwards, Lewis passed for an extreme sceptic; and there certainly were departments in which he pushed incredulity beyond the limits of reason. But early Roman history was not one of these. When at the present day we turn back to that monument of sober erudition, the impression left is one of extreme caution in rejecting stories now believed to be absolutely untrue. It is, on the negative side, much in advance not only of Niebuhr, but also of Schwegler, whose unfinished Roman history belongs to the same date. Still the idea of a great agrarian agitation extending through a hundred and twenty years of the early history of the Republic survives unquestioned, and is also to be found in the Anglo-German historian, Wilhelm Ihne, who is in criticism a follower of Lewis. But in the very year when Ihne's first volume appeared Mommsen published an essay[1] going to show that the stories of Spurius Cassius, Marcus Manlius, and Spurius Maelius are fictions made up in the time of Sulla, and reflecting back into an earlier age ideas and passions connected with the schemes of the Gracchi. Nevertheless in the eighth edition of Mommsen's Roman history, of which the English translation is dated 1894, as also in Mr. Pelham's compendium, issued the year before, the old account of a Licinian Rogation for limiting the amount of public land held by any one citizen is maintained unquestioned. Yet it had already vanished into limbo under the still more searching scrutiny of B. Niese,[2] confirmed by the eminent Italian scholar, Ettore Pais, whose criticism of the sources of early Roman history is the most comprehensive and thorough that has yet been compiled, the famous Tribune Licinius Stolo himself fading into the reflex of another Licinius, 'the rich,' who really flourished in the third century B.C.[3] We may say generally

[1] In the 'Hermes' for 1871, reprinted in 'Römische Forschungen,' II., pp. 153 *sqq.*

[2] 'Hermes,' xxiii., pp. 410 *sqq.* Cf. Niese, 'Römische Geschichte,' p. 55.

[3] E. Pais, 'Storia di Roma,' Vol. I., Parte II., pp. 141 *sqq.*

that whatever Cornewall Lewis doubted is now positively denied, while much that he did not doubt has shared the same fate.

Apart from the Homeric question, criticism of Greek history began later than criticism of Roman history, and may be almost said to date from Grote. It was for those times a daring innovation to declare that the agrarian legislation, currently ascribed to Lycurgus, was a fiction inspired by the revolutionary schemes of Agis and Cleomenes. Nevertheless Grote seems to believe in the existence of Lycurgus himself no less firmly than in the existence of Solon.[1] The Spartan legislator is also accepted as a real personage by Curtius,[2] Max Duncker,[3] and Adolf Holm,[4] although the last-named writer is aware that serious doubts have been expressed on the subject,—among others by Wilamowitz,[5] the greatest of contemporary Greek scholars. But it is significant that the more recent German historians of Greece agree with Wilamowitz in identifying Lycurgus with a god, and consequently in rejecting his whole legislation as a myth.[6]

Thus in the early history of Sparta—literally evolved out of their moral consciousness by Stoic philosophers—we have, just as in the early history of the Roman republic, an imaginary exemplification of ideals belonging to a much later age. And both instances admirably illustrate the process by which the post-exilian legislation of Judaea was projected back into the early history of Israel, and embroidered with narratives as fictitious as anything in the 'Utopia' of Sir Thomas More, or in Campanella's 'City of the Sun.'

Greek history as now studied furnishes us with another parallel to Pentateuchal criticism. The story of the great Persian war, as related by Herodotus, gives figures for the forces on both sides which, so far as the armaments of Xerxes are concerned, have long been subject to doubt. After undergoing

[1] Grote's 'History of Greece,' Vol. II., p. 259.
[2] 'Griechische Geschichte,' I., 163.
[3] 'Geschichte des Alterthums,' V., 268.
[4] 'Griechische Geschichte,' I., 225–6.
[5] 'Homerische Untersuchungen,' 267–85.
[6] Ed. Meyer, 'Geschichte des Alterthums,' II., 564; Beloch, 'Griechische Geschichte,' I., 306; Busolt, 'Griechische Geschichte,' I., 578; Pöhlmann, 'Geschichte des antiken Kommunismus,' I., 130.

successive deductions, made in a somewhat haphazard fashion by Grote and those who have followed him, the whole statistical problem has recently been taken up and for the first time treated on scientific principles by Professor Hans Delbrück in his very interesting 'History of the Art of War.' The result of his careful investigations is to show that the Greek historians not only exaggerated the numbers of the Persians to an enormous extent, but also estimated the Greek forces at about double their true strength. According to Professor Delbrück, the great and decisive battles described by Herodotus were fought by small armies, the generalship of the times not being equal to the management of large masses in the field; and on each occasion where they were victorious the numerical advantage, as well as the superiority of armour and discipline, was on the side of the Greeks. What is more, he establishes the possibility of such gross over-estimates as those which Herodotus records by pointing to similar misstatements on the part of contemporary Swiss chroniclers, who declare that Charles the Bold commanded from a hundred to a hundred and twenty thousand men at Granson, and three times as many at Morat; whereas in the first battle he had only fourteen thousand, and a few thousand more in the second, the Swiss levies being considerably superior in strength. And this, he says, can be proved by original documents giving the numbers on both sides.[1]

Similar investigations made by Beloch with a view to determining the population of the Graeco-Roman world[2] go to dissipate the delusion that the free citizens of antiquity lived in idleness on the produce of slave-labour. At all times there were more, and sometimes many more freemen than slaves; nor indeed is a very profound knowledge of classic literature required to convince us that most of these freemen had to work hard for their living.

It appears, then, that the negative criticism of the nineteenth century is by no means limited to the religious records of the Jews and the early Christians; it has been exercised with impartial severity on every school-tradition in which former generations were brought up; and a prejudice against the supernatural has had absolutely nothing to do with its destructive

[1] Delbrück, 'Geschichte der Kriegskunst,' I., 8–9, and 40.

[2] Beloch, 'Die Bevölkerung der griechisch-römischen Welt.'

results. It is true that miracles and other improbabilities have an unfortunate habit of occurring with great frequency in the narratives which, on other grounds, excite most suspicion; but that is a fatality for which the critics cannot justly be made responsible. To accuse them of a misleading prejudice against the supernatural is like saying that they set out with a great dislike to female influence, because their historical conscience obliges them to point out that legends like those of ancient Rome, in which women play a great part, are generally of late and fictitious origin.[1]

Whilst German scholarship has been tending in all ways, both direct and indirect, towards loosening that confidence in ancient records which is the historical basis of revealed religion, Continental literature, in so far as it touches on religion at all, and in so far as it finds English readers, must be counted as a force thrown against natural religion also. I think it will be admitted that the modern Continental writers most likely by their surpassing genius, and even more by their profound seriousness, to influence educated opinion in England, are Tolstoi, Ibsen, Nietzsche, and Maeterlinck. Now of these four three are most emphatic in their rejection of theism, while the fourth, Ibsen, although not particularly interested in the subject, lets it clearly be understood that he has no religious belief. Tolstoi has a religion, and one professedly based on the Gospel, but a Gospel, like Matthew Arnold's, without a personal God, without a future life, and appealing to the direct authority of Christ himself for its negation of immortality. More than this, the great Russian prophet passionately denounces the whole cycle of ecclesiastical dogma as a standing obstacle to the acceptance of Christ's real message, which, according to him, is purely ethical. The truth or error of his interpretation does not concern us here. What concerns us is that a thinker and an artist of the noblest aspirations, and most devotedly attached to Jesus as a person, should reject all that our own religious teachers habitually represent as the necessary basis of true morality, of hopefulness, of love, should reject it also after

[1] Probably they survive because women, being naturally more interested in such stories, teach them by preference to their children—a great advantage in the literary struggle for existence.

an earnest study of the pages whence celestial light is supposed to stream, with every benefit of instruction from a Church which our clergy habitually celebrate as next in purity to their own.[1]

Ibsen is Tolstoi's contemporary, but his literary career represents more typically than Tolstoi's the great process of the nineteenth century, the return from a vague religious romanticism to the study of nature as it is, under the guidance of classic art, of purely human ideals. This revolution had already been accomplished in Russian art and thought about 1860, whereas in the Scandinavian countries, which were much less accessible to influences emanating from Germany, France, and England, it was delayed for a few years longer. Thus it happened that much of Ibsen's early manhood was wasted in writing romantic dramas, which, though little read abroad, still remain, I believe, more popular in Norway than the masterpieces of his riper age. Like John Sterling's, his conversion to sane realism dates from a residence in Rome, and was proclaimed to the world, under symbolic forms, in 'Brand' (1866). A drama on the life of Julian, entitled 'Emperor and Galilaean' (1873), seems to anticipate a new religion, developed out of Christianity, and incorporating the best elements of Hellenism, as the faith of the future. But in Ibsen's last plays, which alone are widely read by the cultivated classes among ourselves, this remnant of romanticism disappears, and of religious belief, present or prospective, none apparently remains. In 'An Enemy of the People,' Petra, Dr. Stockmann's noble-hearted daughter, mentions as one of the unpleasant experiences of school-teaching, that she has to tell the children lies.[2] What these lies are may be inferred from a later scene, where the same Petra refuses to translate an English novel because it assumes that there is a supernatural providence arranging things for the ultimate benefit of 'what are called good people,' and for the confusion of 'what are called bad people.'[3] The hero of another late play, 'The Master-builder,' gives up building churches and devotes himself entirely to the construction of human habitations, but listens eagerly to Hilda Wangel's suggestion that these also might be supplied with lofty towers,—a symbolic way of saying that to

[1] 'Ma Religion,' Chap. viii.

[2] *Op. cit.*, Act i., Scene 5.

[3] Act iii., Scene 5.

keep within the limits of experience does not exclude the cultivation of idealism.[1]

Nietzsche is so well known as an anti-Christian and atheistic writer that I need not be at the trouble to quote a single passage in illustration of his irreligious opinions. It is, however, worth while to notice that his position in German literature and German thought, although it marks an extreme, does not contrast violently with the attitude of his predecessors, but merely makes the substance of their teaching somewhat more explicit. What is peculiar to him has less importance than what he has received and developed in the direct line of descent extending through Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, moving, as it advances, ever further from the old religious beliefs. In this connexion a highly significant circumstance is that Nietzsche, beginning as a disciple of Schopenhauer, should have ended by thoroughly discarding his master's pessimism, and thus triumphantly refuting the confident predictions, even now not completely silenced, that to renounce the belief in a future life will lead to despair of any joy in the life we now possess. There was a time when the utterances of religious unbelievers gave a certain countenance to such gloomy anticipations. But that time has gone by, and in view of the present more cheerful temper displayed by rationalists, we may fairly attribute the morbidness of their predecessors to political circumstances, to the sensitiveness of genius, or to the isolation caused by holding unpopular opinions.

A brilliant example of the new spirit is offered by the last great writer on our list, M. Maurice Maeterlinck, whose beautiful and touching work, 'Le Temple Enseveli,' combines the most explicit repudiation of theism with the most ardent devotion to humanity and the most hopeful views of its future progress on the lines of moral perfection. M. Maeterlinck tells us at the very beginning of this book that it is written for 'those who do not believe in the existence of an omnipotent and infallible judge, watching over our thoughts, feelings, and actions, upholding justice in this world and completing it elsewhere.' For, as he observes later on, if it cannot be absolutely proved that the infinite and invisible forces about us are indifferent to our morality, still the probability that

[1] *Op. cit.*, Act i., Scene 10.

they are indifferent is overwhelming; and it is by overwhelming probabilities that our conscious life is determined.[1]

Maeterlinck himself is not a rationalist but a mystic, and he stands first among those who are trying to revive the study of the German mystical and romantic school—more particularly Novalis—that flourished rather more than a hundred years ago. With him, as with William Morris and Dante Rossetti, the important thing to notice is the detachment of romanticism not only from Catholicism but from Christianity, and not only from Christianity but from Natural Religion.

Since the deaths of Renan, Taine, and Zola, French literature has ceased to be a factor in the highest European thought. If the obscurantist movement now going on in France influenced England at all, it could be only as a repulsive force. The reactionary leaders are only interested in Roman Catholicism, and only interested in that by the help they expect it to give them in re-establishing a military despotism. Our liberal philosophy is the object of their profoundest abhorrence; and even apart from rationalistic developments, all Protestants are to them only less hateful—if at all less hateful—than Jews. It seems probable that the efforts of these gentlemen to uphold an unjust sentence, originally obtained and subsequently defended by evidence deliberately forged for the purpose, has opened the eyes of many to the value of Catholicism as a means of moral discipline. The sentence of the Rennes Court-martial on Captain Dreyfus was immediately followed by a letter from Professor Mivart to the 'Times,' openly charging the heads of his own Church with virtual complicity in the crimes of the French Staff, and then by a series of attacks on Catholic dogma which eventually led to his excommunication. To the same date belong the decisive pronouncements of Dr. Frazer, Dr. McTaggart, and Mr. G. E. Moore, quoted in this and the preceding chapter, which place English rationalism in line with the most advanced Continental thought.

To say that a religion is false because some of its champions have been trying to murder an innocent man by slow torture would, indeed, be the height of unreason. But no one is asserting such an absurdity. The present negations of

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 108–9.

rationalism have been reached by a critical process begun twenty-five centuries ago in Ionia, and continued at a greatly accelerated speed during the last two centuries under the impulse of what has come to be known about things as they really are. And if the question of religious truth could be debated, like questions of scientific truth, solely as a matter of objective evidence, or if religious beliefs could be publicly contradicted with no more scandal than is caused by dissent from the reigning scientific theories, there would be no need to reserve the contradiction for a moment when the cause of religion seems to be compromised by some particularly odious crime, understood to have been committed on its behalf with the full approval of its supporters. When the only argument for beliefs is that they are useful, the best opportunity for assailing them with success is when they are shown to be useless or mischievous, for then the proofs of their irrationality have the best chance of being heard; and the proofs will be remembered when the occasion for advancing them has been forgotten.

Granting all this to be true, Protestant believers may observe that the responsibility for such scandals as the Dreyfus case falls exclusively on the Church of Rome, just as the responsibility for the attempts to destroy the kingdom of Italy, the German empire, and the French republic during the seventies fell exclusively on the Papacy. Such a plea opens the wider question whether there is any logical alternative between ultramontane Catholicism and the rejection of all religious belief. Cardinal Newman and other Catholic theologians have said that there is none. Some rationalists have expressed the same opinion; but it is an opinion that I at least have never been able to accept. Assuming that religious belief ought to be determined by authority, it seems to me that the authority of the Orthodox Church is at least equal to that of the Roman Church, and that the authority of Jewish tradition far surpasses either of the two. Indeed the fatal weakness of traditionalism as a method of faith consists precisely in this inevitable multiplication of corporations, each claiming to be the sole depository of a divine revelation. Their claims can only be adjusted by reference to reason; and reason, when once admitted, arrogates to herself the ultimate arbitrament on

every point in dispute. Roman Catholic theologians themselves admit, or rather insist, that the truths of natural religion are not based on authority, but on reason. We know what arguments they use in defence of theism; good or bad, they have nothing to do with the claims of Christianity in general or of the Vatican Decrees in particular. They may be, and actually are, accepted by many to whom those claims seem insufficiently attested, or even in contradiction with acknowledged truth.

Since, then, the contention that there is no logical alternative between atheism and Ultramontane Catholicism appears to be illusory, the question of what is legitimate controversy has to be considered on other grounds. When the intellectualist finds himself convinced that a certain system of belief admits of complicity or connivance with having an innocent man defamed and tortured to death by those who know that he is innocent, is it fair or wise on his part to use the opportunity for showing that the system itself is false from beginning to end, with the consciousness that his reasonings apply equally to other systems, not responsible for that crime, nor, at present, for any crime whatever? It may, of course, be contended that the duty of seeking out and destroying error is only limited by the difficulty of obtaining a favourable audience. But there is no need to go so far, and the question, for rationalists, may be safely put on grounds of practical policy. For, practically, arguments telling against all religious systems may be urged against Catholicism alone without implicating any other form of Christianity in the same fate, nay, even without injury to anything that is truly Christian in Catholicism itself. Average human beings are not logical, least of all when they are good religious believers; when strongly impressed by an argument against the truth of their religious beliefs, they do not give up the beliefs entirely; they continue to hold the same faith as before, but to hold it in a more attenuated form; which also is the form that best allies itself with gentleness and charity. This may be called a qualitative compromise. But there is also such a thing as quantitative compromise. I mean that in presence of arguments logically destructive of all religious belief a part only is given up, and that very likely just the part that has not been attacked. Thus the public and reasoned

denial of God's existence tends in Catholic countries to turn the average belief into a sort of unacknowledged Protestantism, and in Protestant countries to turn it into a sort of unacknowledged natural religion; and this sort of attenuated or imperfect faith is likely to do less mischief than the unquestioned creeds of a more ignorant age.

The facts brought together in this work leave on my mind no sort of doubt that rationalism is more prevalent in England than it has ever been before, and that this level, to say the least of it, is likely to be maintained. We might suppose, from some hasty expressions of Berkeley, Swift, and Butler, that Christianity was threatened with speedy extinction in the early Georgian period; but their misconception becomes evident when we are reminded that the intellect of England, in which they themselves represented the highest rank, still remained, with very few exceptions, true to the faith. To all appearances, what they had in view was merely the frivolous society of London, Bath, and Scarborough; the county families and the middle class had not got so far as to be touched by doubt. The intellect of England for the last fifty years has, with few exceptions, renounced even what Dr. Arnold would have called Christianity; and even the religious apologists who now most nearly represent Berkeley and Butler, that is, Dr. Hastings Rashdall and Professor James Ward, would have been considered by those two Bishops as little better than infidels.

Assuming, however, that the intellectual state of England at the present day realises that 'general decay of religion' lamented by Butler in his Charge to the clergy of Durham in 1751, have we any reason to expect that it will be followed by such another religious reaction as that which, beginning before Butler spoke, culminated in the fanatical pietism of 1827? I do not think that we have. For that reaction was brought about by causes which have either ceased to exist, or have ceased to operate with the same power. William Law and John Wesley were largely inspired by German influences, just as the Tudor Reformers, and possibly even the Lollards,[1] had

[1] The word Lollard is Dutch, and originally designated a praying confraternity.

been. And the Tractarian leaders were influenced, to a less extent it is true, but still to some appreciable extent, by the French Catholic reactionary writers who came after the Revolution. But Germany has long ceased to be a focus of pietism, her propagandist action being now exerted solely in favour of socialism, or of rationalism, or of the two combined; while French Catholicism—what there is of it—has of late assumed a form intensely repugnant to English ideas. Scotland, which also counted for a good deal in the first third of the nineteenth century as at least a sustaining force in English pietism, has gone over with passion to the critical side; indeed, Scotchmen form the majority among the latest and most advanced contributors to English rationalism. Irish Evangelicalism, also a potent ferment in English religion, is now impotent if not extinct. Against these losses we have to set some very doubtful American importations, which, with the present development of American rationalism, are not likely to amount to much in the future.

All such foreign influences had originally drawn their strength from the uneducated masses abroad, and appealed to the uneducated masses at home. With the spread of education that appeal will find less and less response. The great historian of the English people, who knew and loved the people so well, perfectly foresaw what was coming. 'The clergy,' wrote J. R. Green, 'the clergy know that a thoroughly educated people, and that people without any uneducated class, would be the ruin of their Establishment. . . . The working-men do not go to Church or Chapel; and as they grow in knowledge and self-respect they still stay away.'[1] Education has vastly increased since Green's time, with the result that all classes 'stay away' in much more considerable numbers. 'When we compare the results of the census of church-going taken by the "British Weekly" in 1886 with the results of the census taken in 1903 by the "Daily News," we find that the Churches have lost' about 450,000 worshippers, allowing for increase of population, 'in less than twenty years in London alone.'[2]

The congregations, such as they are, show a great majority

[1] 'Life and Letters of J. R. Green,' p. 172.
[2] McCabe's 'Religion of Woman,' p. 85.

of women, these being from twice to three times as numerous as the men. Women are in fact the last reserve force of unreasoning faith. But education is spreading much more rapidly among them than among the people, and to all appearances with the same results. Only so can the great success of such books as 'The Story of an African Farm' and 'Robert Elsmere' be explained. And I think it will be found that when women adopt rationalism they hold to its principles more steadfastly than men.

Small as are the flocks, it has become increasingly difficult to supply them with well-educated pastors, or indeed with any pastors at all. Colenso, writing in 1862, drew attention to the dwindling supply of university men among the candidates for ordination. Twenty-four years later Dr. Edwin Abbott laments to hear that at Trinity and St. John's, Cambridge, 'of the Fellows who took their degree between 1873–9 only eight, out of sixty or thereabouts, took holy orders; and of those who took degrees between 1880–6, only three out of sixty. Trinity is conspicuous; of the sixty Fellows who took degrees from 1873–86 only two have been ordained.'[1] The six Oxford Tutors to whom we owe 'Contentio Veritatis,' writing in 1902, observe that 'the decline in the number of candidates for Holy Orders, especially from our Universities, is widely deplored.' And they 'have reason to believe that other causes, besides the uncertainty of earning a living wage, are contributing to this decline.'[2] It is implied that among those other causes modern criticism holds a foremost place. Yet the bonds of clerical subscription have been relaxed,[3] and under the pressure of rationalism much that used to cause offence has been removed or transformed. The Fall is explained to mean that our simian ancestors, on developing into men, gradually found out that an

[1] 'The Kernel and the Husk,' p. 353.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. viii.

[3] The Clerical Subscription Act, passed in 1865, is understood by Dr. Abbott to substitute a general assent to the doctrines of the Church of England, as set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles, for a particular admission of each Article by itself as true (p. 343). This Act should have been mentioned in Chap. xvi. as an instance of the reaction of rationalism on politics, and I take this opportunity of repairing the omission. In the same connexion I ought to have mentioned the Clerical Disabilities Relief Act, passed in 1870. It enables clergymen who wish to leave the Church to recover the civil position they held before their ordination.

unrestricted indulgence of their animal appetites sometimes collided with the interests of the community. The Atonement means that a good deal of unmerited suffering befalls those who work for the welfare of others. Hell is something between a place of exile and a reformatory. Inspiration means that the Bible is superior as religious literature to the other sacred books of the East. But to believe that the Liturgy and the Lessons mean no more than that is not less difficult than to believe the old dogmas in their old sense. To make believe that they mean it is a piece of intellectual Jesuitism to which English gentlemen will not long submit. When religion is a live thing a living wage for its ministers is always forthcoming. But a living wage for a repetition of dead formulas is something that cannot be honestly asked, and that will not be cheerfully given.

Shortly before his death, Tennyson foretold, or at least suggested as a possible contingency, that all religious forms would be given up in a hundred years.[1] History has not to deal with the future but with the past, and rationalism has not to advise but to criticise. In the work which must now be brought to a close I have sought to exhibit without disguise what the processes and results of rationalistic criticism on the religious beliefs of England, so far, have been. No conclusion commanding the unanimous assent of English thinkers and scholars has yet been reached. But there has been a steady accession of intellectual opinion to the side of those who hold that religious belief, like all other beliefs, must ultimately be determined by pure reason, and that, judged by reason, the doctrines of what we call natural and revealed religion are no more than survivals of primitive superstition. Whether such beliefs as Buddhism or Positivism may properly be called religious is another question, and one that does not concern us here. Still less have we to do with the question, can religion exist apart from any fixed belief whatever; and least of all have we to consider what will be the practical consequences of religious disbelief, should it ever become universal, or whether any substitute for it can or ought to be provided. Such problems are for practical men and moralists, not for the historian of

[1] 'Life,' Vol. II., p. 401.

opinion. But wise and prudent conduct demands before all things that we should see the facts as they are; and those are not least among England's helpers who, regardless of consequences, in all ages have taught her children, by using their reason, to distinguish what is false from what is true.

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